Commentary

Volume Sixty-three, Number Two, February 1977

IN PRAISE OF NEW YORK
PETER L. BERGER

PARTY & INTERNATIONAL POLITICS
DANIEL P. MOYNIHAN

THIRD WORLD FANTASIES
WALTER LAQUEUR

WHY THE NEW RIGHT LOST
JEANE KIRKPATRICK

ANGLOCOMMUNISM?
ROBERT MOSS

POET OF EXILE
ROBERT ALTER

STORY
JEWISH SONS
ANNETTE HENKIN LANDAU

FICTION
ANN BEATTIE & THE 60'S
JOHN ROMANO

BOOKS IN REVIEW
JAMES Q. WILSON
JOSEPH SHATTAN
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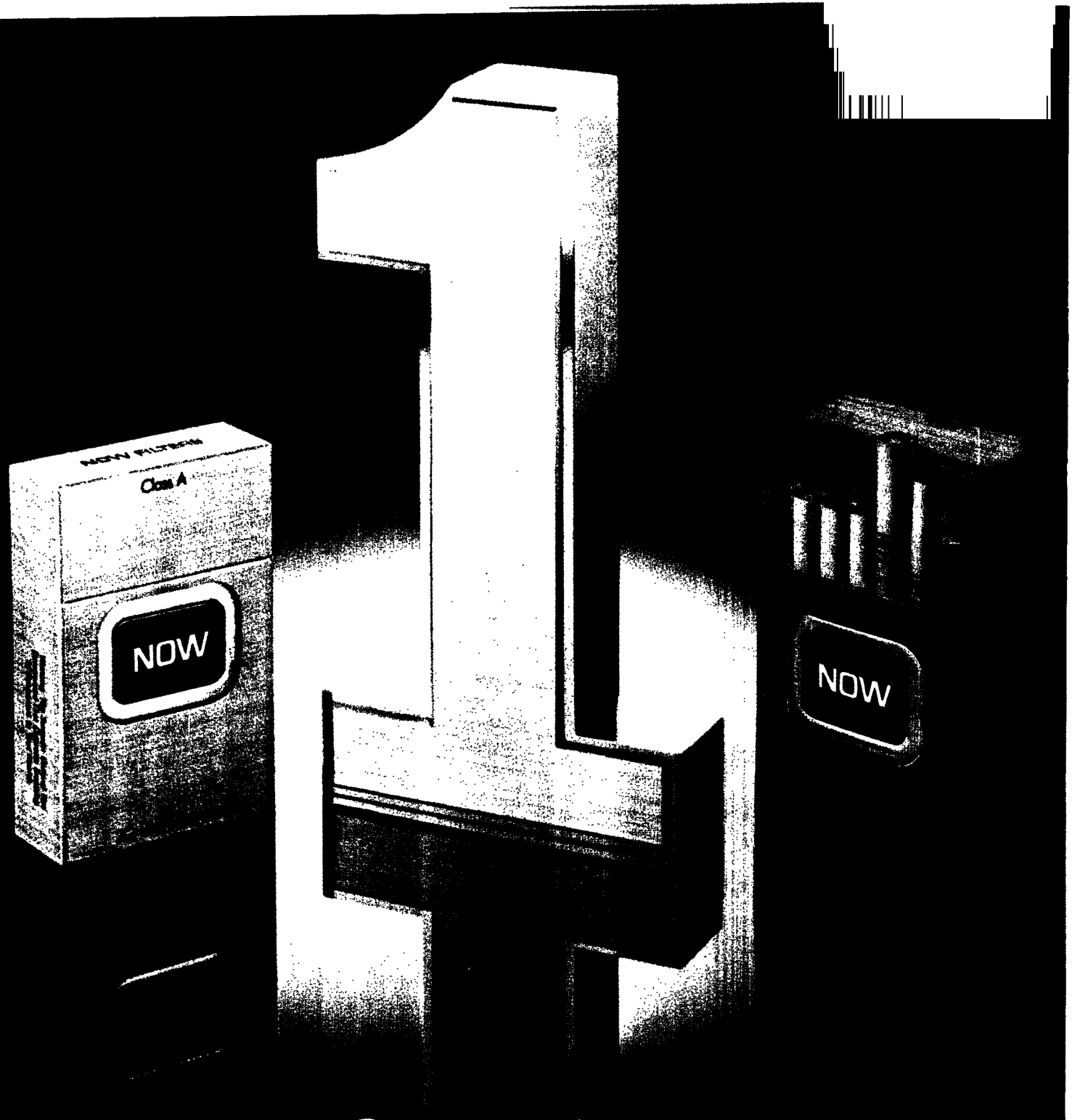

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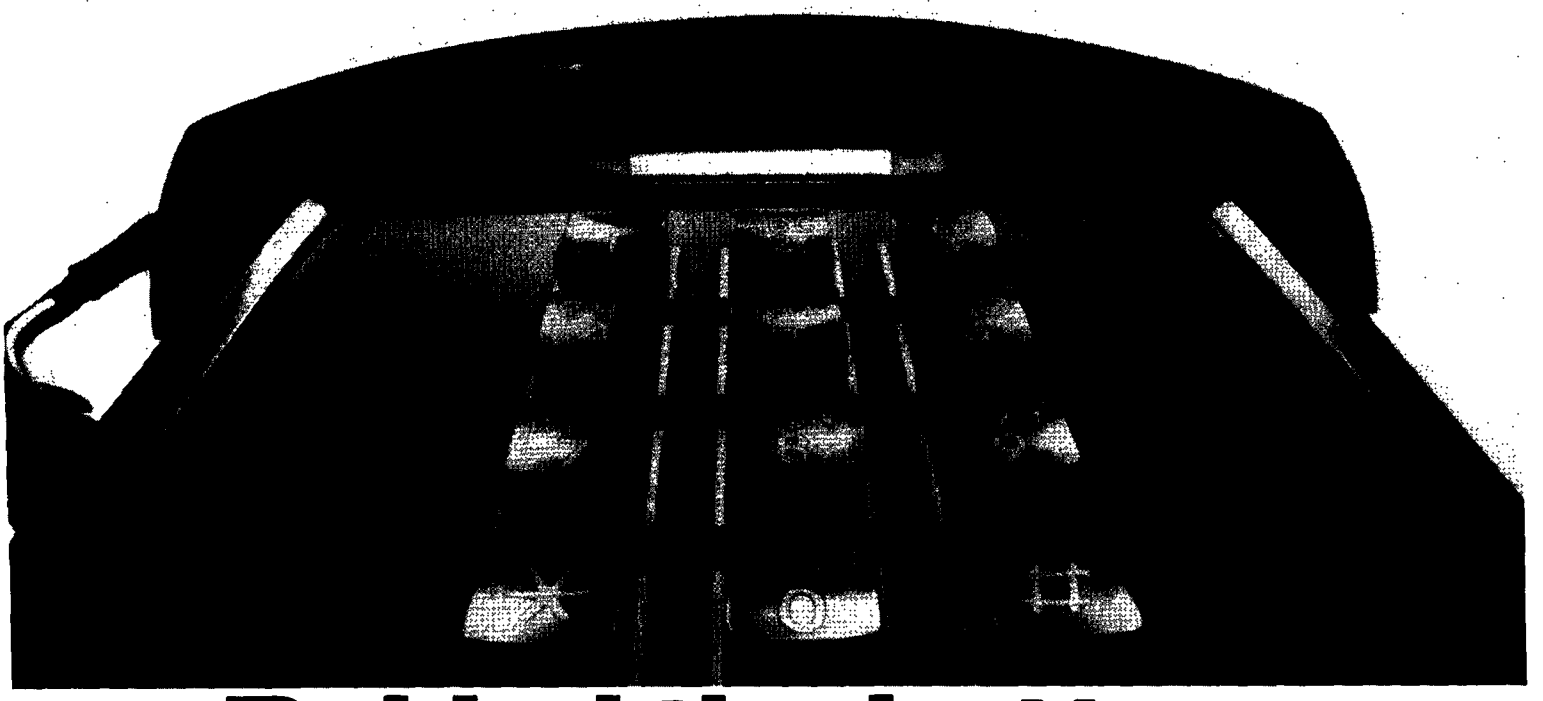

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Commentary

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Next time you get sick, who do you want to prescribe your medicine for you?

You'd be surprised how many people want to get into the act.

And their motives aren't bad.

Some people say that pharmacists with their better-than-ever training ought to be able to substitute another version of the medicine your doctor prescribes.

Certain consumer groups say that such substitution would save consumers money. Another admirable motive.

Then there's the government: some state legislators and members of Congress keep proposing that pharmacists ought to be able to substitute— but only the *least expensive* version of the drug.

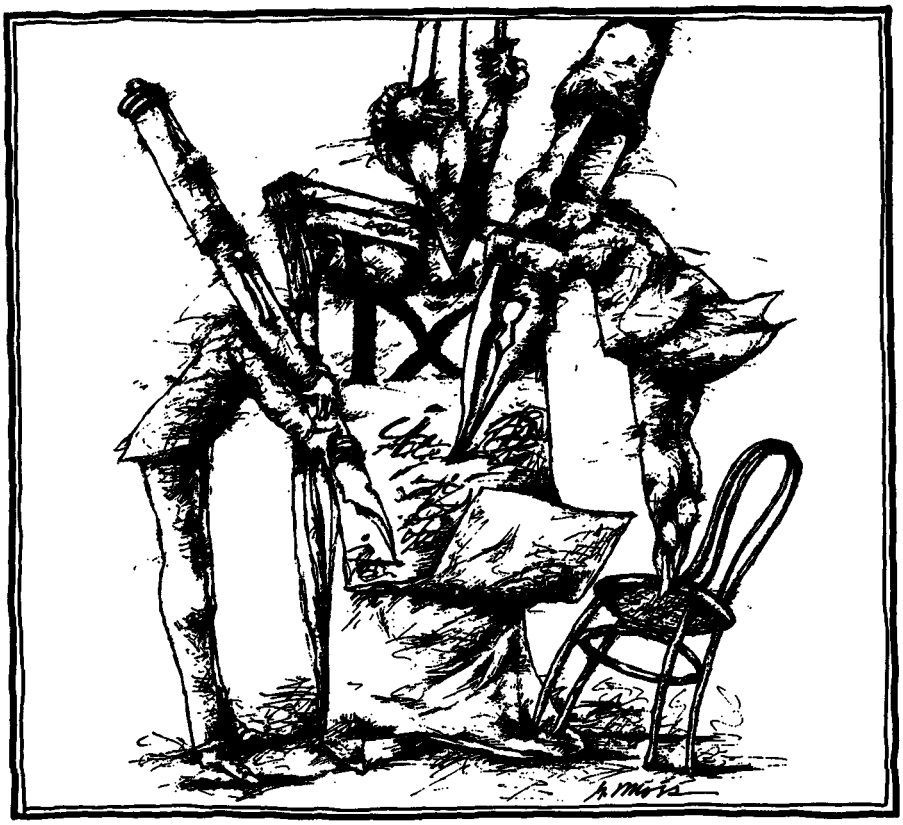
The member companies of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association applaud the motives but have serious doubts about the conclusions.

First, we think the money-saving argument is fallacious. Some provinces in Canada have allowed substitution for years. When you look at the bottom line for evidence that Canadian consumers have saved money, it's not apparent. The same is true where substitution has been tried in the U.S.

But there's much more dangerous thinking in this substitution debate.

It's the opinion that a drug is a drug is a drug.

The fact is that two versions of the same drug, formulated by different manufacturers, can have different effects in the body.



The U.S. Congress' Office of Technology Assessment has said as much. So have many scientific experts in drug therapy.

Which leads us to the conclusion that only one person has the knowledge—both of medicines *and of your condition*—to prescribe.

Your doctor.

We don't think someone else ought to force a substitute medicine on your doctor.

And we don't think you ought to have to take a substitute medicine.

We hope you agree.

The Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association

If you'd like to comment, we'd like to hear from you. Write us at Dept. CM-702, 1155 Fifteenth St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

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"So even if a ship's held up only a few hours, you may be short several hundred thousand barrels of crude. The whole process depends on an uninterrupted supply. So you have to talk to the transportation and supply people to make other arrangements for crude oil delivery.

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"There's an enormous investment in hardware here at Alliance, but even more valuable are the people who make it all happen. Bad weather is just one of the challenges our people meet. But every day, all year long, we maintain the crude supply to produce 200,000 barrels of products.

"It's a real challenge—but that's the job: meeting the challenge, and doing it right."

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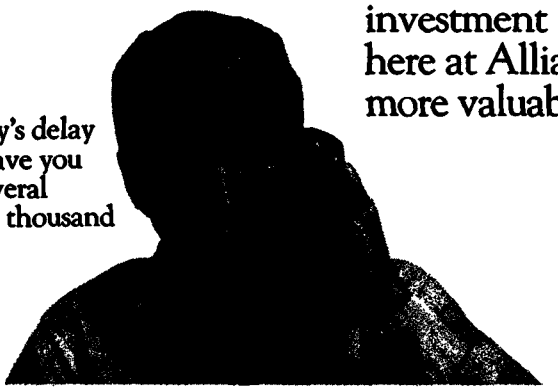
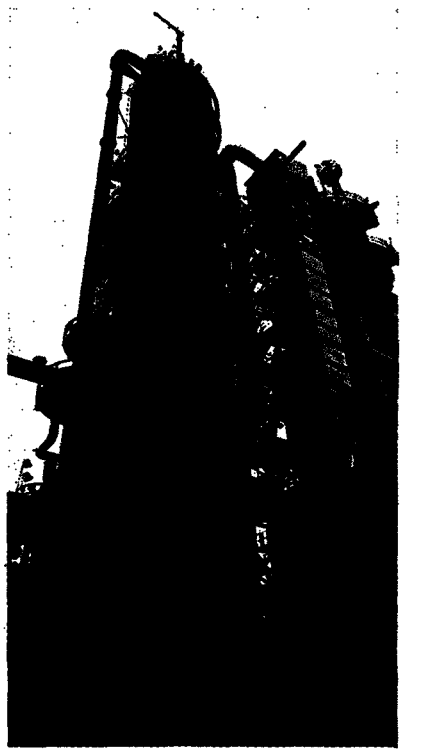


"One day's delay could leave you short several hundred thousand barrels."



"You have to refine different crudes different ways to get the same product."

Gulf Oil Corporation

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In sponsoring COMMENTARY, the American Jewish Committee aims to meet the need for a journal of significant thought and opinion on Jewish affairs and contemporary issues. Its pages will be hospitable to diverse points of view and belief, and it hopes to encourage original creative endeavor in the various fields of culture. The opinions and views expressed by COMMENTARY's contributors and editors are their own, and do not necessarily express the Committee's viewpoint or position. The sponsorship of COMMENTARY by the Committee is in line with its general program to enlighten and clarify public opinion on problems of Jewish concern, to fight bigotry and protect human rights, and to promote Jewish cultural interest and creative achievement in America.

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Letters from Readers

Conservative Judaism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Lawrence J. Kaplan's article ["The Dilemma of Conservative Judaism," November 1976] misses the mark. His description of the anxious mood within the movement is based on the observations of Marshall Sklare. While Mr. Sklare is acknowledged to be one of the leading investigators of American Judaism, many leaders, both *within and without Conservatism*, questioned his conclusions in analyses that appeared in the various publications of Conservative Judaism. But these questionings of Sklare's conclusions are not even mentioned by Mr. Kaplan—much less refuted. Of course, all groups aspiring to improve the spiritual status of their constituents are disappointed by the results of their efforts. Judged by the ideal, all fall short. But this is a far cry from the demoralizing mood of despair which Mr. Kaplan says is characteristic of Conservative Judaism at this time.

Be that as it may, the burden of Mr. Kaplan's article is to show that the methods used by the organs of the Conservative movement—especially the Committee on Law and Standards—have . . . not succeeded in dealing with the issues of Jewish law facing the modern Jew. Mr. Kaplan's assessment is based on two responsa. One, concerning riding to the synagogue on the Sabbath, was published almost thirty years ago. The other—contrary to Mr. Kaplan's assertion—is not an "official" responsum of the movement. It deals with the inclusion of women in the *minyan*. . . . Both of these responsa follow the traditional pattern; they were worked out with care and responsibility, though there are those who disagree with this or that interpretation (as is the case with any rabbinical responsum). Mr. Kaplan also fails to mention that in addition to these two responsa there have been scores of responsa emanating from the official bodies of Conservative Judaism which have had a profound impact on the life of the Jewish community. . . .

Mr. Kaplan's basic error is in neglecting to realize that the vast bulk of members of Conservative Judaism are centrists, accepting deliberate and reasoned change. To focus only on the "Right" and the "Left" within the movement—as Mr. Kaplan does—gives a very skewed picture of what is actually happening within Conservatism.

However, an even more basic error in Mr. Kaplan's analysis is to mistake discussion and debate for a "split" within the movement. All of the individuals mentioned by Mr. Kaplan are members of the Committee on Law and Standards, actively participating in its work and respecting the views of their colleagues, even when they disagree with them. This kind of give-and-take is not a sign of a "dilemma" or "demoralization"—but of vigor and life.

[Rabbi] SEYMOUR SIEGEL
Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I do not know what Lawrence J. Kaplan's prime professional preoccupation may be. His article reveals profound ignorance of the considerable literature which has been published on this issue during the past fifty years and before. He obviously is not familiar with the annual volumes of *Proceedings* of the Rabbinical Assembly which contain numerous learned papers on the question of Jewish law. He quotes from David Feldman, David Novak, Phillip Sigal, and Elliot Dorff, all of whom are esteemed members of the Rabbinical Assembly, but hardly its most representative ideologists and spokesmen. . . .

[Rabbi] WOLFE KELMAN
The Rabbinical Assembly
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Lawrence J. Kaplan's dilemma lies in his perception of Conservative Judaism rather than in the movement itself. . . .

Conservative Judaism . . . is divided into three segments along a philosophical spectrum of "Left," "Right," and "Center," held together by the centrifugal influence of institutional loyalty, social cohesion, and philosophical affinity.

The uniqueness of Conservative Judaism, and where it differs from other religious approaches to Judaism, resides in the authority it vests in the Jewish people for the contemporary validation of Jewish practice (halakhah). . . .

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Conservative Judaism today follows the insights of the late Dr. Solomon Schechter, who sought to adapt Jewish law according to the principle of equity outlined by an ancient sage who, centuries before, had stated, "Go see what the people are doing." This is the implication of the concept which Solomon Schechter called "Catholic Israel," by which he meant that any law which is no longer observed by the masses of the Jews must be regarded as irrelevant, no matter how sacred its origin.

A division of opinion on the weight that should be granted to tradition is natural and even healthy in a movement that wants to meet the challenge of contemporary life. Each rabbinic authority brings to decision-making his temperament as well as his scholarship. Those on the "Left" . . . feel that the time has come to extend the halakhah by legal enactments (driving an automobile on the Sabbath is permitted under certain circumstances; women may be counted in the prayer quorum), while those on the "Right" would limit the flexibility of the law to the latest authoritative pronouncement. Most Conservative rabbis and congregations cling to an eclectic centrist position. But as long as each proponent remains within a rubric . . . [of] commitment to God, Torah, and Israel, there is room for differences of opinion. There always has been. Jewish law has never been static.

Had there been no room to maneuver, Judaism would not have survived the fall of the Temple, prayers would not have replaced sacrifice, and the synagogue would not have emerged.

Only if Conservative Judaism were to fix its posture either toward the "Right" or toward the "Left" would it face the dilemma of the freezing out of either of the two extreme (but not extremist) positions which it presently embraces. Alternative choices do not imply a dilemma. . . .

Conservative Rabbis are neither disturbed by the resurgence of Orthodox Judaism nor distressed by the success of Reform Judaism or the birth of Reconstructionism, which sprang from Conservatism. The variety of religious alternatives is the glory of American Judaism as well as the source of its strength. . . .

Only if any of these movements were to disappear would there be a dilemma, not only for Conservative Judaism, but for the entire Jewish community.

[Rabbi] STANLEY RABINOWITZ
The Rabbinical Assembly
Washington, D.C.

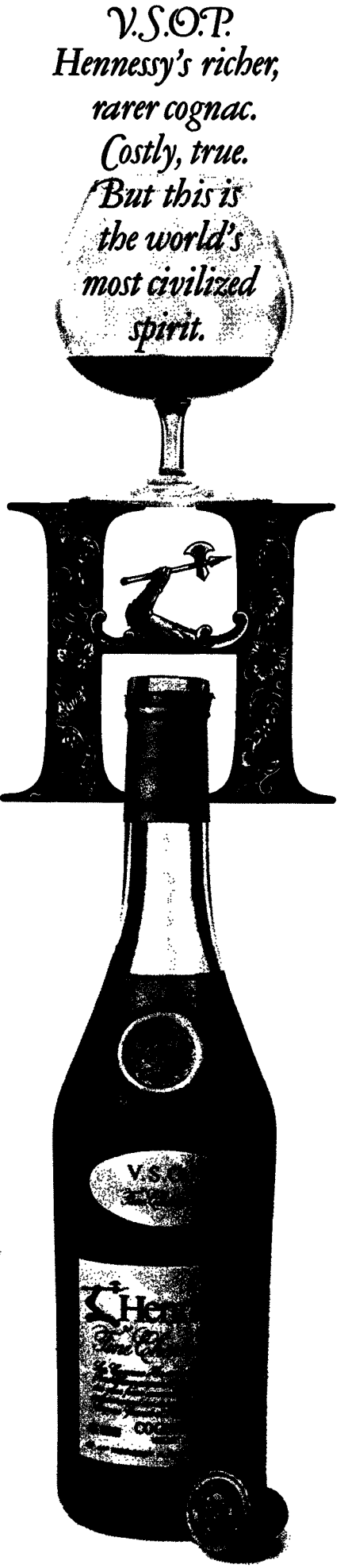
TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Lawrence J. Kaplan's article, "The Dilemma of Conservative Judaism," is a welcome contribution to the ongoing discussion of the status of Jewish law in the Conservative movement. However, he has misinterpreted my own approach, and, more importantly, he has misunderstood the nature and relative strength of the various positions on Jewish law within the movement and the status of the current debate about it.

Mr. Kaplan's central thesis is that "Conservative Judaism is splitting into two antagonistic ideological camps, one of which places ever greater emphasis on tradition and ever smaller emphasis on change, while the other does just the opposite." I disagree. There are right- and left-wing positions, but these are not politically or ideologically polarized, and a large majority of the movement consists of centrists. To see this, it is important to understand the legal assumptions and methods of the various tendencies within contemporary Conservative Judaism.

The right wing tries to adhere to the classical body of responsa as closely as possible. In the past, the right wing was distinguished from the Orthodox movement chiefly by its willingness to search in the responsa for lenient positions, however weak, in order to adjust to current circumstances. In recent times, some of our right-wing spokesmen have opted for the stringent alternative on various issues, making their legal positions hard to distinguish from those of some Orthodox writers. In this Mr. Kaplan is quite right, but it is important to remember that identification with the Conservative movement consists primarily in the adoption of a historical approach to the practices, ideas, and texts of the tradition and commitment to that tradition in a modern idiom. Consequently, an increasing coincidence in practice between the Conservative right wing and the Orthodox does not at all amount to an identity in position.

Similarly, advocates of left-wing Conservative positions may look like some Reform Jews in their



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practice, but that is much more a function of the radical changes that have occurred in Reform Judaism in the last fifteen years on matters of Jewish law than it is a reflection of shifts within the Conservative movement. The left wing is committed to conserving traditional Jewish practice, but it places greater emphasis than the centrists on the individual's role in deciding what to observe and how. . . .

The centrist position is the one I tried to describe in my article, "Toward a Legal Theory of the Conservative Movement" (*Conservative Judaism*, Spring 1973). It does *not* —and I certainly would not—want "the *teshuvah*, or responsum, to be replaced by the *takkanah*, the ordinance." On the contrary, the centrist position seeks to conserve as much of traditional Jewish law as possible. Moreover, it tries as hard as it can actively to convert Jews to a practicing, observant Judaism—and increasingly so in the last decade. . . .

The "Center" is prepared, however, to use the legal device of *takkanah* where necessary in order to make appropriate changes in the law. Since Mr. Kaplan has misunderstood this willingness, several things must be stressed about it.

We institute such changes through *takkanah* only when the modern circumstances or sensitivities require it and only when substantial grounds do not exist in the classical responsa to support the shift. *Takkanah*, in other words, is not a replacement for *teshuvah*; it is *a last resort* to be used only when the method of *teshuvah* cannot be plausibly employed to effect a change that we consider necessary.

Mr. Kaplan's reservations notwithstanding, such a methodology has strong roots in the classical tradition of Jewish law. Such procedure was clearly not standard operating practice, but it *was* used if circumstances required it. . . .

What constitutes necessary circumstances is obviously a matter of judgment, and hence the Conservative movement has made this a *communal* decision on two levels. First, among the rabbis such decisions are made by the Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Law and Standards. The procedures of the committee provide for unanimous or nearly unanimous decisions to be binding on the rabbis of the movement; where there is a substantial split, individual rabbis may follow either the majority or the minority. But in either case, there is a mechanism for community airing and community decision, where that is appropriate. The left wing of the movement differs from the "Center" on this score: while it presumably has no objections to rabbinical organizations discussing the issues, it asserts that all ritual decisions in the end will and should be made by individuals, whether rabbis or laymen.

The communal decision also involves the laity. Jewish law has always been the product of an interaction between the rabbis and the laity. That is the reason for the power of *minhag* (custom). That interaction has not always been well coordinated, and hence the disparity between the textual tradition of Jewish law and the actual practices of observant Jews (e.g., in regard to Passover practices, where the law is really much less demanding than observant women are). Consequently, the open and active debate among the laity about the status of women in worship and in marriage and divorce proceedings is quite traditional.

Moreover, this debate is a sign of health—and here I think Mr. Kaplan has misread the situation completely. For years Conservative rabbis did not talk about halakhah even to one another. It was not until the 1950's that they began to take their approach to halakhah seriously and thus began to make some new decisions. The discussion in the 1950's and 1960's, however, was confined mainly to the rabbis. . . . The fact that the most recent decisions on the status of women have led to widespread discussions and probing among congregants and a United Synagogue resolution encouraging such involvement indicates that we are finally making headway in creating an informed and practicing laity.

That brings us to Mr. Kaplan's central question for the movement: "Shall we judge halakhah in light of our values, or our values in light of halakhah?" I submit that this is *not* subject to an either/or answer for the "Right," "Left," or "Center." It depends on the case, and if there is a substantive issue, the solution is usually a combination of the traditional and the modern. Moreover, the motive behind such changes is primarily our belief that that is how the halakhah should read in view of modern circumstances and modern moral advances; we are clearly not inter-

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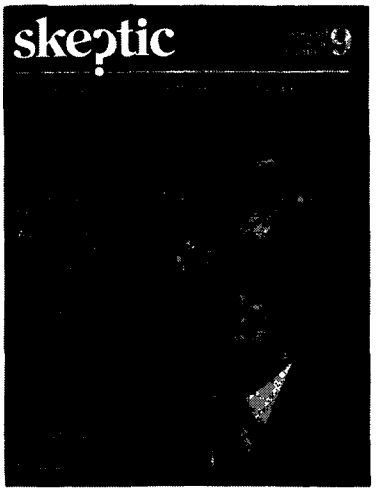

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ested in adopting all the latest fads in order to win Jews to our brand of Judaism. Our efforts to induce greater observance are concentrated in our educational endeavors, not our legal discussions—although there is, of course, some overlapping.

Finally, I would like to take exception to Mr. Kaplan's characterization of the present status of the movement. Spokesmen from the "Right," "Left," and "Center" . . . have articulated their positions vigorously in recent years, but I would hardly call that grounds for claiming that the movement is in a state of crisis. As far as I can tell, there is no serious talk about splitting the movement—as there is in the Reform rabbinate. In fact, if anything, we are probably more cohesive today than we were in the 1930's and 1940's. An important indication of that cohesiveness and of the strength of the centrist core of the movement is that several attempts to disband the Committee on Law and Standards in this decade were resoundingly defeated. We have come to insist on the existence of a communal decision-making body. Within that structure, we have also learned not only to tolerate differences of opinion, but to appreciate them as important contributions to the ideological and halakhic vigor of the Conservative movement.

[Rabbi] ELLIOT N. DORFF
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . The dilemma which Lawrence J. Kaplan considers of recent vintage has been a characteristic of the Conservative movement from its very inception. I have been a member of the Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Law and Standards since 1935. During these years I have noticed the fluctuation of emphasis from "tradition" to "change" and from "change" to "tradition" several times.

To be sure, the Conservative movement has relied on responsa for many modifications and adjustments in religious practice, but the method of *takkanah* (not legislation, as Mr. Kaplan says, but special enactments) is as much part of the tradition as is the use of responsa. . . .

The real problem is not the polarization emphasized by Mr. Kaplan but the pragmatic attitude of most of our congregants and a large number of our rabbis. To them, halakhah not only does not have a veto power, it does not even have a vote. . . .

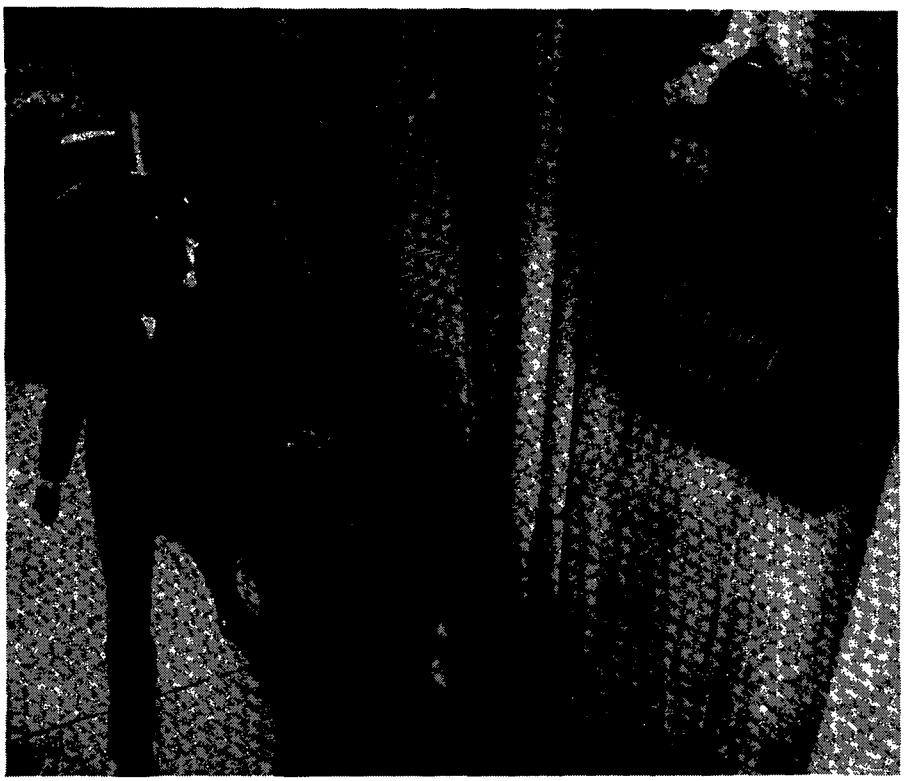
To my mind, the worries of Mr. Kaplan are misplaced. Of course, differences in ideology usually lead to differences in practice, but Mr. Kaplan has exaggerated the differences.

Mr. Kaplan's criticism of the quality of the responsa is unfair. Of course, the responsa vary in quality, but many of them . . . are excellent and compare very well with traditional responsa. Also, on what does Mr. Kaplan base his claim that the majority of the Rabbinical Assembly members are of the left wing? Rabbi Max Routtenberg, who is in a position to know, has often insisted that the movement is like the bell used in educational measurements: the two extremes count for about 5 per cent each, while the rest, the great majority, follow the Center position.

Indeed, we have rabbis in the Conservative movement, who, like our Reform brethren, believe that halakhah no longer has a place in modern Judaism. They have usually identified with the Reconstructionist group, which is now a distinct and separate movement. Those who remain within the movement by and large still subscribe to the centrality of halakhah, but with the usual variations of more and less liberal interpretations.

The questions Mr. Kaplan poses at the end of his article apply not only to the Conservative movement but to all men of conscience. The values and norms that modern life presents are not all of one cloth. All have to be scrutinized critically. A pious traditional Jew will not accept them just because they are modern. If he has to give up values which he cherishes as a Jew and which have molded his life, then the price is too high. But if these values should prove to be a blessing and an improvement, then, as in the past, they can be incorporated into the Jewish way of life without harm to its integrity. . . .

We are grateful to Mr. Kaplan for alerting us to the tensions that exist in the Conservative movement. But we do not subscribe to



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his analysis that these tensions represent a "crisis of confidence."

[Rabbi] ISAAC KLEIN
Buffalo, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I have been a member of the Rabbinical Assembly for fifteen years and a regular attender of its conventions. It is news to me that our "leading spokesmen" are given over to gloom. Perhaps it is true that the heady optimism and frequent triumphalism which characterized many speeches in the 50's has given way to a more balanced view of a pluralistic American Jewry in which Orthodoxy has a secure and creative place and in which synagogues have surrendered many communal functions to federations. Yet the overall picture is bright: the movement is still the focus of "rabbinical in-migration" by Orthodox and Reform rabbis, and the Jewish Theological Seminary continues to attract and train qualified academics not only for itself but for the universities of Israel and America. The "leading spokesmen" cited by Lawrence J. Kaplan as "plagued by self-doubt, disquiet, and gloom," are in reality the more vocal adherents of "Left" and "Right" ideologies which have traditionally served the function of defining the outward parameters of Conservative concepts. They are the frame, not the picture.

Conservative Judaism has always driven ideologues into paroxysms of frustration and despair. . . . Orthodox Jews see our traditionalism as a camouflage for our rejection of halakhah while Reform Jews chide us for a faint-hearted reluctance to come clean and admit our antinomian bias. The broad middle of the movement plods steadfastly along in its singular indifference to its purported plight. In the last convention the right wing, angered by the law committee's public pronouncement in favor of counting women in a *minyan,* tried to emasculate the committee. In a different but analogous situation the left wing introduced a motion calling on the Seminary to admit women to the rabbinical program and to ordain them. Both moves were soundly defeated, for diverse reasons. . . . What was significant, however, was that in both cases the majority did not feel exercised enough to support moves to challenge the leadership. We have always had people at both ends of the spectrum who have told us that

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it was time to fish or cut bait, or that the movement had to get off the fence and choose either the traditional or the liberal side of the question. Such appeals have been uniformly ignored by rabbinate and laity alike. . . .

It is the nature of all centrist groups to spawn ideologues at both extremes who demand "clarification." These people tend to be committed, bright, and articulate. Finding the broad middle unresponsive to their sense of urgency, they reach out over its head to debate the issues with the ideologues on the other side who at least seem interested enough to argue back. These pyrotechnics enliven the pages of house organs and often overflow into the general and the Jewish press. Once out, they inevitably attract the attention of journalists, theologians, and academicians who find the slash-and-thrust of the debates more interesting than the dull bread-and-butter issues which preoccupy the vast majority of the working rabbinate.

This is not to suggest that the Conservative rabbinate doesn't face serious problems or that many of its members don't criticize the leadership in very specific terms. It would, however, be a serious mistake to presume that the Conservative movement is in some kind of crisis because of a "Left"-"Right" ideological split. It just isn't so.

[Rabbi] GILBERT KOLLIN
Fair Lawn, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I greatly appreciate the accurate and sympathetic description of my theological position by Lawrence J. Kaplan. However, Mr. Kaplan's assertion that there is no real difference between my views and those of the modern Orthodox is somewhat exaggerated. For despite my traditionalism, both theological and halakhic, I do not base it on fundamentalist assumptions. Here is where traditionalists like myself and my good friend, Louis Jacobs, are clearly outside the Orthodox camp. Nevertheless, those of us on the "Right" surely have more in common with *any* group of Jews who take normative Judaism seriously than with those groups who regard Jewish law as something to be created at will.

[Rabbi] DAVID NOVAK
Baltimore, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Lawrence J. Kaplan . . . is not correct in his assertion that "the classic genre of the responsum has proved an insufficient instrument" for change. I cannot speak for the chairman of our Committee on Law and Standards or for my colleagues on it, but I can speak for myself, as one who has been active on the committee for almost twenty years and secretary of it for a sizable portion of that time. The responsum continues to be a perfectly sufficient instrument for change. The major changes that have been introduced via responsa were indeed effected in a "traditional halakhic manner," *contra* Mr. Kaplan. The question obviously revolves around how we understand the "traditional halakhic manner." While Mr. Kaplan apparently took the time to read the books of men he styles as coming from the "Right," he did not mention my book, *New Dimensions in Judaism*, which precisely explains the "traditional halakhic manner." It is neither what the Orthodox expect nor what has become the "myth" of halakhic Judaism; it is, rather, what the rabbis from the premishnaic period through the talmudic period did, and the way they did it. And it is this tradition that the law committee has followed. . . .

Contrary to what some think, the great halakhists of the past never insisted that "modern-day values" have to give way before halakhah. Instead, halakhah could be shaped by those values. . . . What Mr. Kaplan describes as the method of Rabbi David Novak is not at all in the historical halakhic tradition, but is typical of the Orthodox posture since the 17th century. . . .

The present writer has never favored "change through legislation," except insofar as *interpretation*, whether by Justices of the Supreme Court or rabbis of the law committee, serves to legislate anew. We do seek precedent to inspire innovation. And it is of a certain style of denigration to charge that "this camp" (the "Left") wants the Conservative rabbinate to revise, change, and abrogate "as it sees fit." Not at all. Not "as it sees fit," but as it sees fit for our time in accordance with the historic procedures of halakhic Judaism.

And now for particulars. Mr. Kaplan cites a nonexistent passage in the responsum recommending that women be counted in the prayer quorum. . . . Nowhere did I say in the responsum that we should include women in the *minyan* today because a rabbi in the 13th century held "if nine men are present at a *minyan*, a woman may be counted to make up a quorum of ten." No rabbi said that. Furthermore, Mr. Kaplan would find it very difficult to prove that the imaginary view of that nonexistent rabbi was "disputed by all subsequent authorities." The halakhic process in that instance was not "stretched beyond recognition." . . . On the contrary, the halakhic process was used to bring the *minyan* halakhah into alignment with a whole host of medieval permissive halakhot relating to women. . . .

I can only recommend that those interested read the responsum and *New Dimensions in Judaism*, as well as my article, "Elements of Male Chauvinism in Classical Halakhah" (*Judaism*, Spring 1975), which Mr. Kaplan also cites. That article covers nineteen closely printed pages and footnotes. Mr. Kaplan quotes a nonexistent passage from it, combining a few lines on the last page. . . .

The article did not call for "abrogation of existing law." It called for the institution of new halakhah, and in some cases the restoration of old rights available to women, which were denied to them when "exemptions" were distorted into "prohibitions."

When Rabbi Elliot Dorff or I call for whatever it is we call for that disturbs Mr. Kaplan, we do not abandon the claim to be the legitimate heirs of pre-modern Judaism. Far from it; we stake out the claim. . . . That was how pre-modern Judaism functioned. Rabbinic Judaism, indeed, was a reforming movement. Judaism survived only because the Yavneh reformation was carried out in the teeth of opposition. Judaism has survived into the 20th century for the same reason. And for the same reason it will continue to survive. . . .

The answer to Mr. Kaplan's question whether halakhic Judaism can thrive in an open society if it is in dissonance with the values of that society is, Yes. The whole point is to develop the right halakhah—what he calls the "fit." That is a complex issue, and obviously when he injects "values" he is speaking of something more than ritual, and sometimes not at all about halakhah. Whether we are to judge halakhah by our values or vice-versa is an unnecessary dichotomy. Halakhah can be in dissonance provided it is geared to life.

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Life should be ennobled by halakhah. . . . Halakhah is the instrument through which we worship God. We have to understand it, respect it, and love it. Only then will we become committed to it. In some periods of history . . . Judaism required complex revolutions, profound revisonism, to survive. We live in such an age again.

[Rabbi] PHILLIP SIGAL
Duquesne University
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

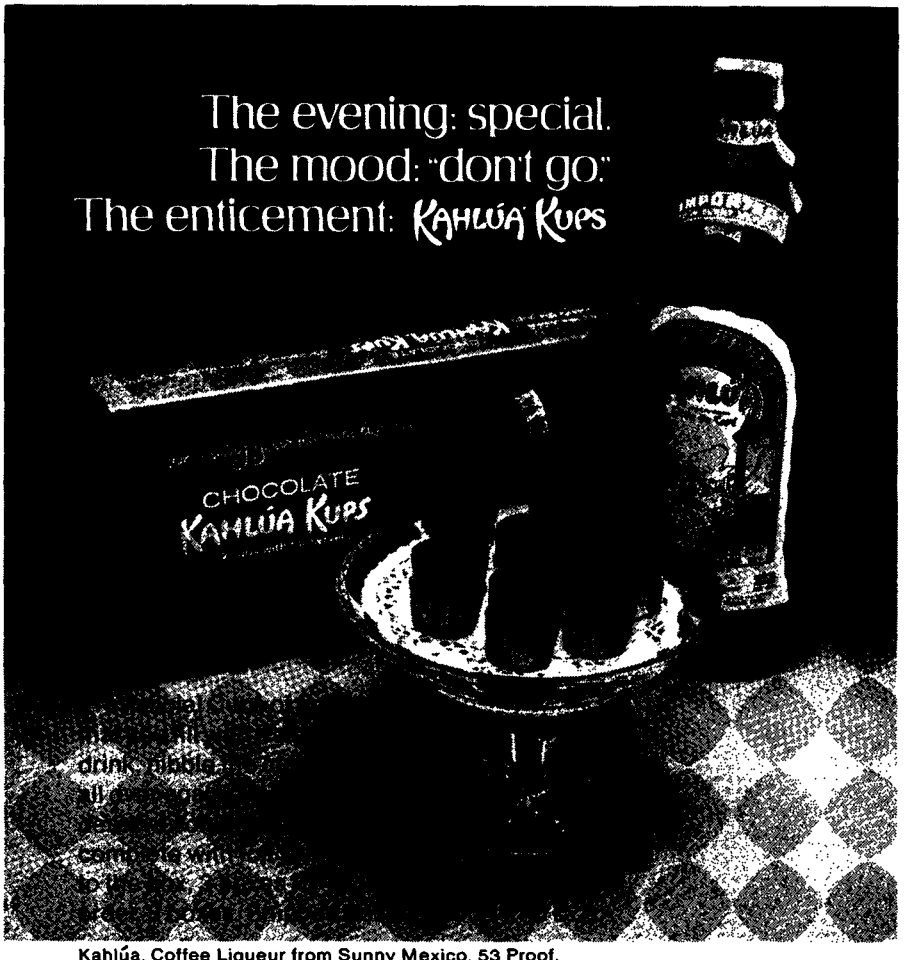
At the very outset . . . Lawrence J. Kaplan seeks to damn the entire Conservative movement by placing it in the middle between Reform and Orthodoxy. In these days, when absolutes reign supreme and extremism is equated with the authentic, one need only invoke the word "middle" to dismiss or denigrate any position. . . .

The Conservative movement, if looked at in a larger and more generous perspective, is really normative Judaism seeking to carry forward, into contemporary times, classical rabbinic Judaism. Mr. Kaplan disdainfully notes that some of our "modernizing" responsa "reflect the desperate and rather naive belief that where partial liberalization of halakhah failed to win Jews over to observance, greater liberalization will succeed." This is really condemning latter-day Conservative Judaism by some of its early beginnings. In the early days of the movement these "naive" beliefs did in part motivate our leaders in their desperate battle to perpetuate Judaism and to maintain the values of tradition. I can earnestly say, from my experience as a member and sometime chairman of the Committee on Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly, that the main motive in discussing a halakhic problem has been the intrinsic merit of an issue. Certainly the needs and the attitudes of the day must intrude themselves in any halakhic discussion, as they did in talmudic times and in the responsa written since. . . . Toward the end of the article Mr. Kaplan seeks to set up a dichotomy between the values of society and the values of the halakhah, implying that the halakhah must remain aloof from the surrounding turbulence and tensions in order to maintain its integrity. In time, and in a miraculous way, halakhic values would enter to influence the consciousness of society. This same monastic point of view has been espoused again and again by the leaders of Orthodoxy and most particularly by a luminary of Orthodox thought, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, in his essay "Halakhic Man." But were the Talmud or the Codes and their commentaries or the midrashim fashioned in a vacuum? There was a constant interaction between the halakhah and the marketplace, the home and the courtroom. To say otherwise is to be blind to the genius of the halakhic process. There is a terrible danger in seeking to separate or divorce the halakhah from life, even if it be in the guise of a temporary measure. The halakhah . . . then loses all contact with the urgent ethical and moral issues of the day. . . .

There is one criticism by the author that indeed pains us deeply: his quotation of Marshall Sklare's statement that "there is not a single Conservative congregation where the overwhelming majority of congregants practice the commandments according to the Conservative regimen." We are painfully aware that our piety is often limited to the synagogue professionals. We are struggling with this problem and seeking ways and means of overcoming it by establishing *havurot* [religious fellowships] within congregations and seeking to intensify our educational programs from childhood through adulthood. It is small comfort that the same criticism can be lodged against the vast majority of Orthodox congregants outside the few major urban centers on the East Coast. In rabbinic times the "elite" talmudic sages had to overcome the indifference and disdain of a majority of the population, the *am haaretz*, by example, teaching, and leadership. It is to be hoped that we will be able in time to do the same.

To paraphrase the author's conclusion, but in a more generous way, how Conservative Judaism will answer some of our fundamental problems will determine the future of Judaism.

[Rabbi] BENJAMIN Z. KREITMAN
The United Synagogue of America
New York City



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To the Editor of Commentary:

Lawrence J. Kaplan has shown a keen perception of the dynamics of a movement that only twenty-five years ago was being hailed as embodying *the* future of American Jewry.

Perhaps he could have amplified this dilemma further by stressing the plight of the Conservative rabbis themselves, especially those who constitute the right wing of the movement. The current controversy regarding *aliyot* for women, highlighted (and perhaps even intensified) by the decision of the Rabbinical Assembly that essentially allows each of its member rabbis the prerogative of deciding this emotion-laden question for his own congregation, brings this quite clearly into focus. . . .

Each Conservative rabbi will henceforth be at the mercy of his board of directors, who, among other functions, directly determine the terms of the rabbi's contract and tenure. In colonial America this was known as the "power of the purse"—its implicit powers of persuasion have not notably diminished in the succeeding years. . . .

The biblical dictum, "Follow the many" [in judgment], which reached historic fruition in the majority-rule principle of the great academies of ancient Babylon and Israel, has now, in the modern Conservative congregation, evolved into a justification for a popular democracy where the only prerequisite for an individual to vote on issues embodying 3,000 years of Jewish tradition and scholarship is that he be current in his financial obligations to the synagogue.

Norman A. Bloom
North Miami Beach, Florida

Lawrence J. Kaplan writes:

My article is challenged by my correspondents on both sociological and ideological grounds. Rabbis Rabinowitz, Dorff, Klein, Kollin, and (by implication) Kelman, contend that the majority of Conservative rabbis are still centrists; and they, as well as Rabbi Siegel, insist that I have exaggerated the ideological differences between the Conservative "Right" and "Left." I will address myself to these two criticisms in order.

First, let me note that I was describing a process still going on, one that is by no means completed. Even if it were the case that a majority of Conservative rabbis are centrists, it would still be significant that among the younger articulate Conservative theorists of halakhah we find only the "Right" and the "Left" represented but not the "Center." Moreover, it is not the case that the ideologists on the "Right" and "Left" are, as Rabbis Kelman and Kollin contend, unrepresentative. Rather, the drift to the "Right" and "Left" and the consequent polarization are affecting the movement as a whole. Thus, I find it amusing that Rabbi Klein has seen fit to cite Rabbi Max Routtenberg in support of the view that the majority of the movement are centrists. For Rabbi Routtenberg himself has raised doubts similar to mine concerning the viability of the centrist position, remarking ironically that "Whenever we wish to deviate from traditional norms we must dress it up like a real halakhic responsum." Or are we to assume that Rabbi Routtenberg, who served as co-chairman

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A Simple Solution To The Energy Problem

We are continually being urged by the Government and others to conserve energy which comes directly or indirectly from fossil fuels because our oil reserves are running low and our oil imports are growing larger and larger. However, we almost never hear anyone mention all of the good, clean energy which is going to waste every day in the form of unharnessed windpower which is being dissipated across the face of our country.

A paper entitled, "THE HIGH POTENTIAL OF WIND AS AN ENERGY SOURCE," was recently published by two engineers with the Lockheed-California Co. at Burbank, California. It was based on a study they recently made under the sponsorship and the financing by THE ENERGY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION, more commonly known as ERDA. An abstract at the beginning of this paper reads as follows:

"Wind Energy is an abundant resource in the United States. It can be captured economically by large wind turbine generators and used to supplement electric energy provided from fossil fuels and hydro-electric sources. Today's technology is more than adequate for wind energy to make an immediate contribution to alleviating the energy crunch. A recently completed study sponsored by THE ENERGY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION shows that the full potential of the wind is far greater than previously estimated. Full implementation would produce clean energy without pollution, and would make a significant contribution to the conservation of our fossil fuel reserves."

You may wonder why we have not taken advantage of this abundant energy source if it is both technically and economically feasible. The reason is very simple:

In 1926 Congress wrote a provision into the income tax law which enabled those people with incomes from the extraction of minerals and fossil fuels, such as oil and coal, to escape the income tax entirely on up to 50% of their net income from such extraction. The tax deduction which made this possible has come to be known as the percentage depletion allowance. It is not actually a percentage depletion allowance because it is not based on a percentage of the deposit depleted.

It is actually a percentage production allowance because it is based on a percentage of the production with no regard whatever for the percentage of the deposit depleted. According to information supplied by the Library of Congress, this allowance runs between 10 and 16 times as much as the actual depletion. No tax advantage, even remotely comparable, was given to the people trying to develop the clean, inexhaustible sources of energy such as wind power and solar power.

Congress has failed for 50 years to remove this inequity from the tax laws which has worked to the extreme disadvantage of those trying to raise capital to develop the clean, inexhaustible sources of energy. If Congress continues to fail to remove this inequity, it is not likely that these clean, inexhaustible sources of energy will be developed to any significant degree very soon. The development capital will obviously continue to flow to where the tax advantages are.

Does it make any sense to continue to give these enormous tax advantages to encourage the further exploiting of our valuable non-renewable natural resources which are fast running out, to produce energy, and still allow no tax advantages, even remotely comparable, to encourage the development of our clean, inexhaustible sources of energy? If we are really trying to conserve our natural resources and find a permanent solution to our energy problem, it doesn't seem to make much sense.

Since we have continued such taxing policies for 50 years and still continue such policies, could we logically expect to be anywhere except right in the energy mess in which we now find ourselves?

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of a special committee for the Revitalization of the Law Committee of the Rabbinical Assembly, is also not representative?

More to the point, before the last Rabbinical Assembly convention in March 1976, over one hundred Conservative rabbis of traditionalist sympathies attempted to organize a protest against what they perceived as the movement's leftward drift, and in particular against the attempt to impose liberal practices on unwilling rabbis and congregations. Although the protest failed to get off the ground because of poor planning, the fact that it was contemplated at all indicates that the general leftward drift of the movement is not just a product of my feverish imagination. With regard to the smaller rightward drift, I would merely point out that over the past few years the student body of the Jewish Theological Seminary, the training school of Conservative rabbis, has itself become increasingly traditionalist, a development that has been a source of great concern to the Seminary faculty.

As for the claim that I exaggerated the degree of ideological polarization between "Right" and "Left," let us look at the attitudes of Rabbis David Novak and Phillip Sigal. Rabbi Novak writes that he has "more in common with any group of Jews who take normative Judaism seriously than with those groups who regard Jewish law as something to be created at will." Rabbi Sigal, on the other hand, in a review of *Modern Reform Responsa* by the noted Reform halakhist Solomon Freehof, has welcomed the growing convergence between Conservative and Reform halakhah, and implied that Conservative Judaism has more in common with Reform than it does with Orthodoxy; in his letter to COMMENTARY, furthermore, he specifically describes Rabbi Novak's method as "typical of the Orthodox posture since the 17th century." Thus it would seem that Rabbi Novak has more in common with the Orthodox than he does with Rabbi Sigal, while Rabbi Sigal has more in common with Reform than he does with Rabbi Novak.

The defenders of the "Center," Rabbis Siegel, Klein, and (by implication) Kelman, complain that I ignored the vast body of Conservative responsa and magnified the weaknesses of the responsa I did discuss. The purpose of my article, however, was not to offer an exhaustive history of fifty years of Conservative halakhah but to indicate the weaknesses in the centrist position that have led to the growing dissatisfaction with it. I would agree that there are some fine Conservative halakhic decisions, and I was careful to say that "*many* Conservative responsa," not all, "are characterized by a certain looseness of thought." Nevertheless, I maintain that the two responsa I cited are not isolated instances but symptomatic of a consistent distortion of the halakhic process, caused by the bias toward liberalization, that is to be found in a large and representative body of Conservative responsa.

Both Rabbis Sigal and Dorff, my critics on the "Left," contend that I exaggerated the differences between their approach and that of the tradition, and Rabbi Dorff in particular focuses on the halakhic role of the *takkanah*. Now, I am fully aware of the role that the *takkanah* has played in the development of Jewish law, but I believe that it was never intended to serve the purposes which Rabbi Dorff, in his article on the subject, reserves for it, viz., "the abrogation of previous decisions of Tannaim, Amoraim, Geonim, Rishonim, and Aharonim in permitting things they forbade." Nor does Rabbi Sigal act in a traditional halakhic manner when he writes in his article, "Elements of Male Chauvinism in Classical Halakhah," that "the Jewish approach to divorce even in classical rabbinic times was inferior to that of the Hellenistic world."

Rabbi Sigal says that in my critique of the responsum on women in a prayer quorum I discussed the imaginary view of a nonexistent rabbi. Actually, it is Rabbi Sigal who cites the nonexistent view of a very real rabbi. In the article which I was commenting upon, Rabbi Sigal cites the 13th-century authority, R. Simha, as stating that "a woman may be included in a *minyan* for prayer and when ten are required for grace after meals for purposes of including the name of God in the formula." A quick look at the original source will indicate that R. Simha refers there only to the grace after meals and *not* to a prayer quorum. A number of later authorities do ask whether R. Simha's view might be extended to include counting a woman in a prayer quorum (though at most it would involve counting only one woman), but they unanimously reject even this possibility. Thus in truth there are no authorities at all who state that even one woman may be counted in a *minyan*. As for why I didn't refer to the other arguments in Rabbi Sigal's responsum, I frankly found them irrelevant.

There are two general issues to which I wish to address myself: liberalization of the law for the sake of winning people over to greater observance, and the question of the clash between halakhic values and modern ones.

I am happy to see that many Conservative rabbis are abandoning the illusion that one can win people over to greater observance through liberalizing the law. Nevertheless, I cannot agree with Rabbi Kreitman's contention that Conservative Judaism as a whole has freed itself from this notion. Rabbi Sigal, for example, in his book, *New Dimensions in Judaism*, asserts that "a radical Sabbath-observance campaign among non-observant Jews" would be a futile gesture if it were grounded in the existing halakhah but that it would be a success if the Sabbath laws were to be drastically revised and liberalized.

I deliberately drew a sharp dichotomy between traditional halakhic values and modern liberal ones not because I believe there can never be any ground of interaction between them, but rather because there are times when the clash between them remains clear and evident even after halakhic interpretation and analysis have taken place, and it is then, in making the difficult choices with which we are presented, that our deepest beliefs and commitments come into play.

Finally, there is Rabbi Kelman's intemperate outburst, which should not be dignified with a reply. In a letter published a number of years ago in *Judaism* magazine, Rabbi Kelman lamented "the absence of vigorous, independent, and critical Jewish journalism," stressed the need for critical articles about Jewish institutions and publications, and said that he would welcome such discussions "even when I do not necessarily . . . support their criticisms, or even when I or the organization which I serve might be a target for such investigative critical analysis." Rabbi Kelman might do well to heed his own advice.

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The Brown Decision

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is sad to see repeated in COMMENTARY an old racist canard about *Brown* v. *Board of Education*. In his review of Lino Graglia's *Disaster by Decree* [November 1976], Elliott Abrams writes that the Supreme Court "bas[ed] its decision on sociological and psychological evidence." Mr. Abrams needs to refresh his memory by rereading the opinion.

A single footnote in Chief Justice Warren's opinion, note 11, gave references to recent writings on the psychological effects of racial segregation and discrimination. It was a foolish footnote indeed, a piece of pretentious superfluity—but no more than that.

The conclusion that segregating schoolchildren by law on the basis of race deprived them of "the equal protection of the laws" rested primarily on recent legal precedent: the Supreme Court's own cases striking down segregation in higher education even when a state provided equal physical facilities. The Court quoted a passage from a 1950 decision saying that students at a new Texas law school for Negroes would be deprived of "those qualities which are incapable of objective measurement but which make for greatness in a law school." (Arthur Krock, writing in the New York *Times* the day after the Texas decision, had observed correctly that the separate-but-equal doctrine was now "a mass of tatters.")

The opinion went on to quote from the judgments of two lower courts in the very cases at issue in *Brown*. The Kansas and Delaware courts had both found as a fact that segregation by law adversely affected the black children. A person of common sense needed no learned treatises to understand that, any more than to understand that there was something invidious when the Nazis made Jews wear yellow stars for identification. The elder Justice Harlan had understood it in 1896, when he said in dissent in *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* that segregation in itself "puts the brand of servitude and degradation" on blacks.

The opinion in *Brown* was far from perfect. But it should not be tied to a footnote that could (and should) have been omitted without affecting the basis of the legal reasoning at all.

After overstating the influence of psychologists on the Supreme Court, Mr. Abrams takes on the role of amateur psychologist himself. He suggests that "the clearest explanation for recent court rulings"—local school decisions that he dislikes—is that "they expand the power of the courts, a result presumably not objectionable to most judges." Is there any evidence for such a sweeping calumny? A lawyer might have been expected to show a little regard for the truth that judges must sometimes decide between deeply-felt opposing claims, not least in these cases.

ANTHONY LEWIS
Boston, Massachusetts

ELLIOTT ABRAMS writes:

Anthony Lewis is, alas, deeply perturbed that there remain indivi-

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duals so ill-informed as to disagree with his most heartfelt beliefs. I am sorry that I must continue to disappoint him.

The bases of the *Brown* decision have been the subject of legitimate debate since 1954. Having refreshed my memory by rereading the opinion, I notice once again that psychology is not relegated to a footnote. Rather, the Court found in its opinion that separation by race "generates a feeling of inferiority," quoted the lower courts to this effect, and then justified this conclusion by stating that "Whatever may have been the extent of psychological knowledge at the time of *Plessy* v. *Ferguson*, this finding is amply supported by modern authorities." It is to this crucial sentence *in the opinion* that footnote 11 is appended.

While Mr. Lewis is correct in stating that the Court's *holding*—that segregated schools are illegal—could have been reached without reference to psychological evidence, he is wrong in stating that the Court's legal reasoning was unrelated to this evidence. As the late Robert McCloskey, the distinguished scholar of American constitutional law at Harvard, wrote of *Brown*, "The Chief Justice chose to go, almost without preliminary, to the question of whether segregation necessarily involved inequality in contemporary America and to rest his affirmative answer heavily on psychological and sociological literature." For Mr. Lewis to invoke comparisons with Nazi Germany and to describe this view as "racist" is, no matter how strong his disagreement with it, an example of irresponsible polemics of which he should be ashamed.

As to Mr. Lewis's statement that I have thrown a "sweeping calumny" at the federal courts, I confess that I lack his sense of melodrama. That the school-segregation cases launched an enormous increase in the power of the courts is generally admitted, giving the judges, as Archibald Cox has written, "altogether novel and overwhelming tasks in the name of 'constitutional adjudication.'" Despite Mr. Lewis's reading of my review, I did not suggest that the judges sought power for power's sake, or were in any sense morally deficient for wanting to solve social problems. On the contrary, what I said was that, regarding the question of judicial power to set social policy, "the temptations are enormous, even for men of good will, perhaps most of all for men of good will: who could resist the opportunity to try and set things straight once and for all?"

My point was—and though Mr. Lewis missed it, it was clear enough—that the judges too often forget that they are *judges*, and that their tasks are limited ones in our constitutional structure. When deciding between "deeply-felt opposing claims," they must act according to the law, and not according to what they believe to be the path of morality or of progress. If they find this view overly constricting, they ought to resign and run for Congress.

The late Alexander M. Bickel once asked: "Can anyone offer assurance that the problems of schooling, and more generally of relations between the races, are soluble only in accordance with present judicial prescriptions, regardless of the perverse and increasingly unwanted results they achieve, and that other solutions or transitional expedients are not worth trying?" Apparently, Mr. Lewis can. I find myself in agreement with Professor Bickel that "the judicial process . . . is, in a vast, complex, changeable society, a most unsuitable instrument for the formation of policy." While Mr. Lewis is not a lawyer, he might nonetheless have been expected to show a little regard for this truth. In any event, the lack of a full legal education will excuse Mr. Lewis only for his ignorance, and not at all for his arrogance.

Schoenberg

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As a result of Samuel Lipman's article ["Schoenberg's Survival," November 1976], I wasted exactly 27 minutes and 33 seconds listening to Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*, the musical piece which Mr. Lipman tells us established that composer. Mr. Lipman describes the music as possessing an "unforced melodic beauty," which is his cryptic awareness that little melody is to be found here. I came away from this experience of quiet cacophony with the following realizations.

An understanding of why there has "never existed any sizable audience for Schoenberg's major mature works." . . .

A recognition that the "intellectual class of musicians and [the] musical class of intellectuals" who, according to Mr. Lipman, favor Schoenberg are musically decadent, having lost touch with music as something heard and felt. Lost in thought, our intellectuals are in love with their *ideas* of music rather than with music itself.

A painful reminder of the needs of some persons to feel themselves part of an elect of taste and discernment and to see one of their own hailed as the leader, a hunger so desperate that there is a willingness to accept a degraded, ersatz substitute as authentic. The article panders to this mentality.

Additional evidence that our cultural leaders in the intellectual journals are failing to protect society againt such aberrations, having themselves lost the way by confusing a very fallible unidimensional intellectual context with the total sum of reality.

That the leaders of a community which once led the world in establishing universal human values now unwittingly lead it into a morass of subjectivism and vacuousness is a tragedy of colossal proportions.

DAVID BASCH
West Hartford, Connecticut

SAMUEL LIPMAN writes:

I am sorry that David Basch does not find the melodic beauty I do in *Verklärte Nacht*. But it is not clear to me how, from the evidence of this first major composition written when Schoenberg was twenty-five, he can understand why there is no audience for Schoenberg's later and radically different work. The rest of his letter uses strong words indeed—decadent, painful, desperate, degraded, panders, aberrations, morass, tragedy, and colossal—to describe a matter of some complexity and even delicacy: why Schoenberg's conception of musical beauty, held with a sincerity hardly open to question, is not shared by the audience he attempted to reach. We all fancy ourselves watchdogs of the intellectual and social polity, but little can be accomplished in the way of protection by anathematizing those with whom one disagrees and even (if, as seems likely, Mr. Basch thinks my article was favorable to Schoenberg's music) badly misunderstands.

I HAVE been informed through private correspondence that I was in error in stating that Schoenberg

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"had been a Catholic as a child." I based this statement on two sources: the 1957 second edition of H. H. Stuckenschmidt's *Schoenberg* (translated into English in 1959) and Willi Reich's 1968 *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography* (translated into English in 1971). But unknown to me Stuckenschmidt had stated in a 1966 letter that he had made this statement about Schoenberg's one-time Catholicism on the basis of false information supplied by the composer's sister. And in another letter which has also been kindly placed at my disposal, Schoenberg's now dead widow wrote, also in 1966, that Schoenberg never had been a Catholic, though she was a Catholic and his three children (I assume of this, his second marriage) had been raised as Catholics. Of course, the fact that Schoenberg's immediate family for the last twenty-seven years of his life (his most fervently Jewish and Zionist period) were Catholics would seem to strengthen my later point that "He was, for all his ultimate commitment to Jewishness, badly torn between Judaism and Christianity."

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Building Prisons

To the Editor of Commentary:

James Q. Wilson's call for more prisons ["Who Is in Prison?," November 1976] voices a conclusion which most of us in criminological pursuits have reluctantly reached. . . . [But] it does not follow that it is the federal government's business to build prisons for the states. A public-works administration specializing in prison construction would be an unappetizing pork barrel. . . .

What is needed is state criminal-justice planning of a scrupulous thoroughness, something that is often advocated but seldom attained. To my knowledge, only three states—Washington, Minnesota, and Hawaii—have managed to make responsible projections of future needs for prison space and have then made appropriate plans based on these projections. This kind of planning is fairly well understood, and most state-prison directors would like to do it. Unfortunately, . . . the need for such planning is not apparent to the general public or its elected legislators. Consider the changes in our prisons and their causes. Mr. Wilson's statistics reflect a profound shift in the composition of prison populations. The proportion of nonviolent thieves has steadily gone down; the proportion of violent thugs has gone up. The prisoners we now confine have brought the conflicts of our streets into our cell-blocks. The erosion of legitimacy which the criminal-justice system has suffered has had a dangerous impact on the exercise of authority. These adverse trends have combined to make prisons more unmanageable than ever. We have to build them on a smaller scale and manage their inhabitants as though they were people rather than herds. The mega-prisons must be demolished as fast as we can replace them with facilities appropriate to the age.

It is not enough to advocate more prisons. We must build no more than we can prove that we need, and we must raze a great many of those we have inherited from simpler times.

John P. Conrad
Center on Crime and Justice
Columbus, Ohio

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Peace & the Marxists

To the Editor of Commentary:

Your correspondent, Dr. Alfred B. Mason [Letters from Readers, December 1976], writes at length on the absence of consideration of the issues of peace in my book, *Why Marxism?* [reviewed by Victor Baras, September 1976]. He obviously did not read the book or even look at its index, which would have led him immediately to the discussion of the appeal of the peace issue (pp. 161-69).

It is, however, entirely proper to underline the fact that the allegedly Marxist states have turned their back on this side of the faith and stand out in the world as the new Prussias of military discipline, exalting military virtues and devoting an exceptional share of the national product to military purposes.

Robert G. Wesson
University of California
Santa Barbara, California

Populism

To the Editor of Commentary:

It is a pity that historical scholarship is so slow in reaching people outside of the academy. In his letter [November 1976], Lewis Kapner criticizes Milton Himmelfarb ["Carter and the Jews," August 1976] for missing "the real concern many Jews have about Carter: his populist heritage which he still embraces." And Mr. Kapner ends with a quotation from Richard Hofstadter linking populism and anti-Semitism. . . . [But] the whole idea of the populism of the 1890's having been a major source of American anti-Semitism has long since undergone scrutiny and, I had thought at this late date, convincing refutation. See for example (this list is hardly exhaustive) C. Vann Woodward in the *American Scholar* (Winter 1959-1960); Norman Pollack in articles and a book (1960-62); my own book, *The Tolerant Populists: Kansas Populism and Nativism* . . . 1963); Gene Clanton's book on Kansas (1969); . . . and, most recently, Lawrence Goodwyn's *Democratic Promise: The Populist Movement in America*. . . . There is, and will continue to be, ample reason for seeking the historical roots of anti-Semitism in America. But fighting the wrong enemy will not win a war. . . .

Walter Nugent
Bloomington, Indiana

The Abortion Question

To the Editor of Commentary:

I was more than a little disturbed by Magda Denes's reply in the December 1976 letters section to the correspondence on her article, "Performing Abortions" [October 1976]. In her reply, Dr. Denes says in effect that the deliberate stilling of a life is murder and that abortion . . . is murder of a special and necessary sort. These sentiments betray fundamental confusion, moral and otherwise. First of all, it is simply not true that any deliberate killing constitutes an act of murder . . . (what about suicide or euthanasia?). . . . Dr. Denes's statement can also be challenged by the anti-abortionist who might well ask, how is it possible for any act to be both murderous and necessary? This brings me to my second point, which is that Dr. Denes is being . . . morally inconsistent when she decries the act of abortion as murder on the one hand, while favoring our right to perform it on the other.

Patricia S. Herzog
Somerville, Massachusetts

To the Editor of Commentary:

All the comments I have thus far seen on Magda Denes's searing description of the mechanics of abortion miss one central point: Dr. Denes is intellectually honest. Unlike many pro-abortionists, she does not claim that the moral issue involved in the snuffing out of life in the womb is trivial or nonexistent, nor does she refuse to recognize what actually occurs during an abortion. She understands that an abortion means the forcible ending of a life, and this we usually term murder.

But if Dr. Denes is intellectually honest, she is morally hideous: in effect she argues that we must murder, if necessary, to preserve the "quality of life." She quotes one of her subjects to the effect that being "unwanted and a lot of times uncared for" is worse than death. If this proposition is true, why limit its application to unborn life? What about the social burden of the incurably criminal, the mentally defective, the physically crippled, the elderly—or even the political opposition—all of whom are frequently "unwanted"? . . .

Charles A. Moser
George Washington University
Washington, D.C.

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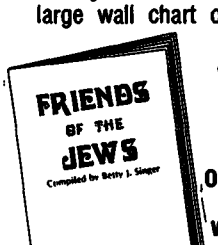

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To the Editors of Commentary:

. . . First, Magda Denes says that abortion is "murder" since it is "the deliberate stilling of life." But I would call it homicide, which, when justified, is not murder. For example, killing in self-defense or in necessary defense of others (including one's country) is not murder.

Dr. Denes then continues: "My own position is that . . . women should be free to abort whenever they wish . . ." and that "abortion is a private decision. . . ." In other words, according to Dr. Denes, women should be free to commit homicide whenever they wish. It would follow, then, that this is justified homicide, except when a woman does it against her will. . . .

Sidney Koretz
Falls Church, Virginia

To the Editors of Commentary:

Hospitals are seldom the place for pleasant sights. I would agree that the procedure for performing saline abortions can . . . be quite horrible, but I doubt that a saline abortion is any more horrible than a mastectomy, a hysterectomy, or even the labor and delivery of an unwanted child. Were I to provide the graphic details of any one of these hospital scenes, I could convince readers that these procedures should be eliminated, but . . . I would then be guilty of the most sensationalist means of persuasion.

As it happens, those of us who offer abortion-referral services would much prefer that women with unwanted pregnancies did not have saline abortions. First-trimester abortions, for which the vacuum aspirator is used, are by far the better alternative. But it is simply not that easy, at least in Canada, for a woman with an unwanted pregnancy to secure a first-trimester abortion. . . .

Until we have perfect human beings and perfect contraceptives . . . there will always be the need for abortion. The way to confront the issue is . . . to seek ways of making first-trimester abortions more easily available . . .

Susan Cole
The Abortion and Contraception Committee of Toronto
Toronto, Canada

To the Editor of Commentary:

"Performing Abortions" by Magda Denes was a chilling narrative which strengthened my conviction that meaningful restrictions must be placed upon the practice of abortion. What comes through most clearly in the article is the fact that abortion has a very disturbing effect on physicians and others involved in it. Their humanity seems sadly diminished; perhaps after one has presided over thousands of deaths, this is inevitable.

One notes the unquestioned assumption that an unplanned pregnancy is such a tragedy that it must be terminated at any cost. As John Szenes, M. D., puts it: ". . . Somebody has to do it. And, unfortunately, we are the executioners in this instance." Yet I cannot help but wonder *why* "somebody has to do it." . . .

Nevertheless, I do not wish to see an absolute ban on abortions. We live in a world in which perfect choices often are not available. Abortion can be considered the lesser evil in some, though not many, instances. These matters can be defined by law, just as other sensitive matters are handled, not perfectly but adequately, by the legal system. . . .

Donald Delano
Los Angeles, California

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . The very strong language of Magda Denes's article—the overemphasis on the description of fetal destruction—slanted the article in favor of the right to life, rather than the right to *live well*. . . .

The ignorance of the young girls described by Dr. Denes, who allow the fetus to grow so large before having abortions, is appalling. There must be more education, beginning at a younger age, teaching birth control rather than abortion as a means of limiting the number of unwanted offspring.

Ruth Herman
New York City

Magda Denes writes:

Unwanted pregnancy is an existential dilemma to which any solution constitutes a loss. There is no getting away from that. Abortion is one solution. There are others, equally good or equally bad depending on one's values.

The important thing, it seems to me, is to remove the discussion of abortion from the legal-political arena and to place it where it belongs: in the realm of the human situation where one is often compromised into making a choice between alternate sorrows.

In that light, legalistic distinctions among "homicide," "justified

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homicide," "self-defense," and "murder" appear to me a semantic game. What difference does it make what we call it? Those who do it and those who witness its doing know that abortion is the stilling of a life.

The same applies to the argument of early or late abortions. True, after sixteen weeks the mother knows her fetus has quickened. But it is also true that long before that time the physician can detect fetal heartbeat and measure brain waves.

Still (in answer to Charles A. Moser), abortion is not comparable to any other act because there is nothing that replicates the condition of a human being forced into housing an unwanted living creature in her body for nine months. Unless, of course, one thinks that the woman has committed some crime for which this is the unique punishment. It is that notion which appears to me truly "morally hideous."

Finally, I should like to quote from my book, *In Necessity and Sorrow: Life and Death in an Abortion Hospital,* a few short paragraphs relevant to the issues raised in the letters:

> Each propelled by who he is builds his own mythical world where this is all right, that is wrong, one thing is just, another a crime. Morality is a fluid notion. Decisions are made in the forgotten histories of people. And there, vulnerable innocence clamors for the preservation of growing things. Those who would ignore that are enemies.
>
> And yet, the enemies of these growing things are also often innocent, and they are invariably vulnerable. Which one to choose, then, whom to affirm, becomes a crushing burden. The saints, were they to occupy themselves with such mundane matters, might decide with ease, and well. The staff [of the abortion hospital] being ordinary folk, are very uneasy. The patients more so. . . .
>
> To say that of all things in this world the seeds are most worthy of preservation is a sentimental falsehood. The greatest of our men have died unreproduced or with progeny alien to their greatness. To say that the lives of those living are of larger import than the lives of those to come is the *hubris* of the generation.
>
> Abortions reside in the realm of *individual struggle, personal defeat,* private hell. The enemy is embedded in being human.

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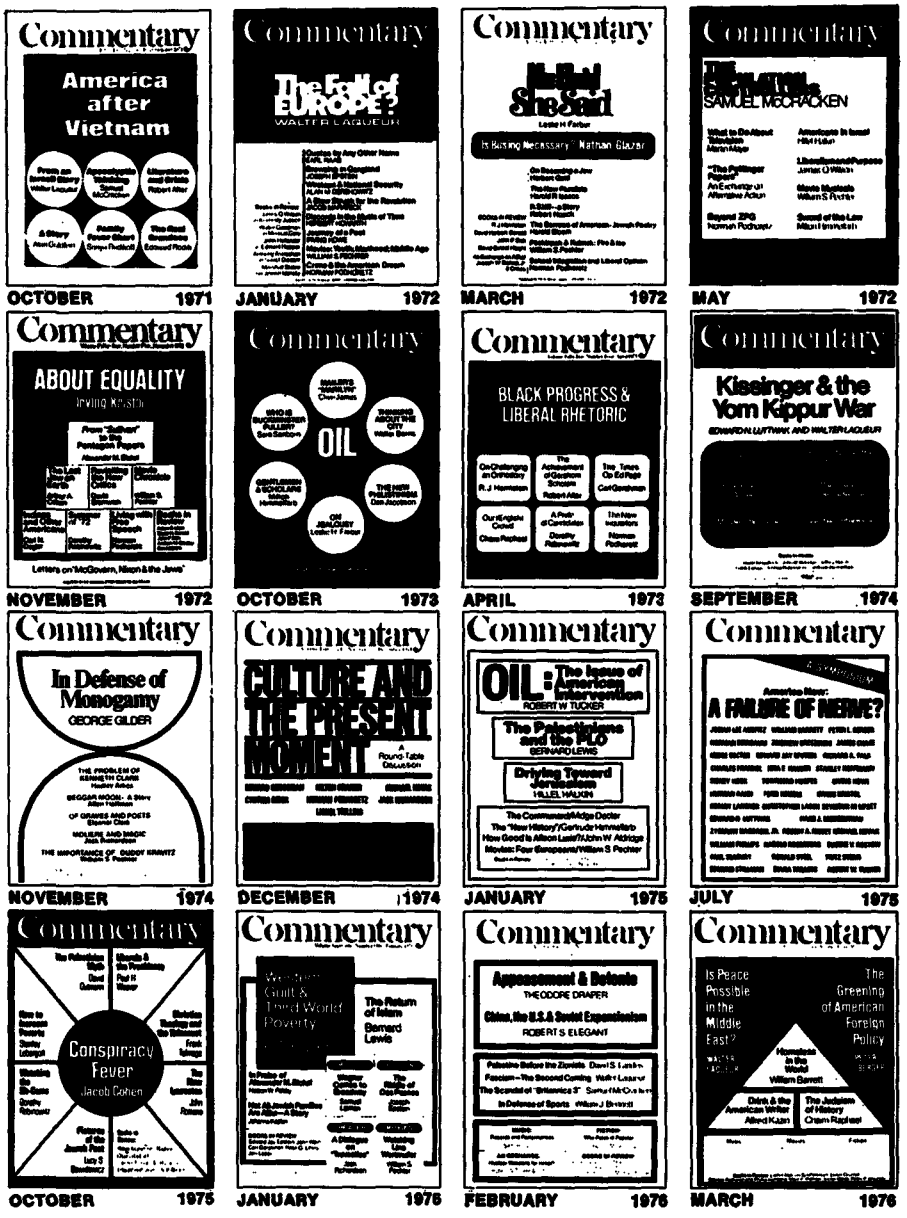

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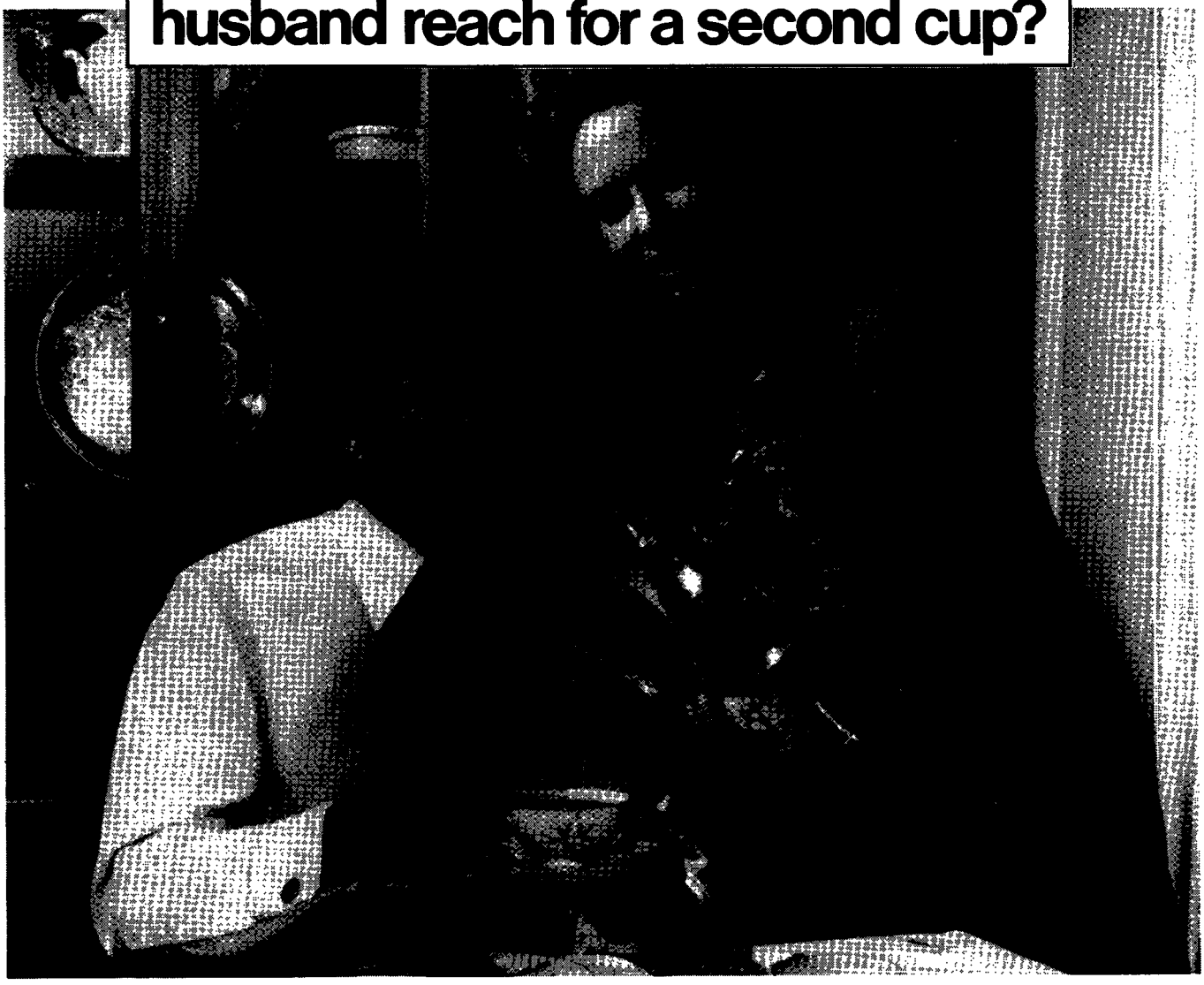

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Anglocommunism?

Robert Moss

I AM sad to confess that every time I fly back to London from any other major Western capital, my heart sinks. This may have something to do with the squalor of Heathrow airport, a dismal but perhaps fitting introduction to the new Britain for innocents from abroad. A few months ago, having touched down at Heathrow, I found myself swaying in the aisle with the other passengers for over half an hour, waiting for the steps to be rolled up to the plane so we could get off. The cabin crew were good enough to explain that "the ground crew have not finished their tea-break."

But the squalor stretches beyond the airport, with its chaos of ugly hoardings and perennial notices couched in Newspeak, apologizing for "temporary inconvenience" due to "improvements" that are being carried out. The more I compare Britain with the countries that it still regards as its peers, the more I succumb to the uneasy feeling that Britain is becoming a Third World country. This is, of course, a subjective impression. But consider the following "Third World" symptoms:

The mañana complex. For many British firms, "immediate delivery" means delivery in six weeks. The average working day in the steel industry, according to a recent survey, is five hours, when time is deducted for lunch-breaks, tea-breaks, and so on.

The state-pensioner mentality. The belief that Big Daddy will provide is devastatingly widespread, and is not altogether irrational. It is more profitable for some people in the British welfare state to stay at home and breed children than to go out to work. A man with a wife and four children, for example, can claim as much as the net income (after tax) of a man earning £85 a week. Recent investigations of the welfare system have produced the case of one man who was given the money to buy a new set of tires for his Jaguar by the Department of Health and Social Security—on the grounds that he needed the car to look for a job—and of another who was given the cash to buy a color television set with fitted doors, which could be officially classified as "furniture."

Animism. This kind of popular superstition is paid lip-service by many leading figures in the new British establishment, which is (contrary to what may be imagined by those reared on P. G. Wodehouse and Evelyn Waugh) a socialist establishment. Its credo is in fact a not-particularly-sophisticated form of animism, based on the idea that "society" is a kind of great disembodied being that can be held responsible for everything that goes on within it. Hence the myth of "social justice," which holds that all differences of wealth, education, or opportunity are "unjust," and that "society" must act to eliminate them. This myth has been used to justify punitive taxes on higher incomes—which led to a record flight of professionals to other countries in 1975—as well as the effort to abolish private medicine and choice in schooling, and to impose a wealth tax.

Cargo cults. Like Solomon Islanders, the men who misspend public money keep watch for the ghostly ships that will bring miraculous "cargo"—oil from the North Sea. What is rarely mentioned is the fact that unless it mends its ways, Britain (with a forecast borrowing requirement in excess of £8.5 billion in 1977, even *after* the cuts made by Chancellor of the Exchequer Denis Healey last December) will have mortgaged its oil revenues in advance. The slogan of the Scottish Nationalists, "It's Scotland's oil," has begun, however, to give some people uneasy nights.

Resistance to technology, or inability to use it. You might have thought that automatic ticket-collecting machines at subway stations were not exactly a breathtaking scientific innovation. Maybe not. But at London subway stations, where they were installed several years ago, they still do not function. Passengers emerging from the subway still have their tickets collected by hand. Something similar has occurred with postal zip codes. When these were first introduced, there was a great publicity campaign to persuade people to put the full zip code on their letters. It later be-

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came known that—due to unspecified backroom difficulties—the computers could only handle *six* zip codes out of thousands. Evil rumor has it that, in both these cases, trade unions intervened to save jobs that might have been lost if the new technology had been allowed to function.

Currency fiddling and tax evasion. I do not know how much money is smuggled out of Britain each year, although our left-wing tribunes vie with each other in offering huger and huger guesstimates. But the police-state powers that have been given to tax inspectors in Britain (who are now authorized to enter a man's home at any hour of the day or night, confiscate documents, and interrogate his family), are signs both of the totalitarian drift in government and of the decline of that sense of civic duty that had long made the self-employed Briton a scrupulous unpaid tax collector. Tax accountants have coined the word "evoision" to describe that twilight zone between tax "avoidance" (which is legal) and "evasion" (which is not). Old ladies are arrested at Heathrow with their life savings in a suitcase; the chairman of a well-known finance house says in private that he is ready to move his entire operation abroad "within seven hours," and Bank of England officials are up on charges of currency fiddling.

Separatism and tribalism. The loss of confidence in central government, and of belief in a world role for Britain, has produced a mood of introversion and the substitution of regional (or tribal) self-identification for a sense of national identity. Hence the rise of Scottish nationalism—in spite of the fact that there are as many Scotsmen living in England as in Scotland—and the sharpening of the race conflict that stemmed from resistance to non-white immigration.

Economic dependence and begging-bowl politics. Britain still maintains a Ministry of Overseas Development, and can still indulge in gestures like giving cheap loans to the Marxist rulers of Mozambique—or the credits, worth almost £1 billion, that Harold Wilson offered the Russians, at a rate of interest that was only half what a housing mortgage costs in London. But Britain's place among the major industrial nations is now that of the man with the begging bowl. The country goes on spending more than it earns, and goes on hoping that the International Monetary Fund will always be there with another loan. I am convinced that if the Labor government continues in office, it will be trying to touch the IMF for yet another emergency credit by mid-1977. The IMF, quite properly, insists that the British should set their economic house in order—but has achieved little more than the shifting around of the living-room furniture and squawks from our "Third World" economic nationalists who would like to set up a siege economy and send the capitalists packing.

The revival of feudalism. Every foreign visitor seems obliged to mention the "class problem" in Britain, as evidenced by Ascot, the House of Lords, and the fact that some of the natives still seem to be able to afford to drive a Rolls-Royce. Viewed from a different aspect, it is arguable that there are now only two classes that count: the people who belong to trade unions, and those who do not. A background paper recently produced by a certain John Hughes of the Trade Union Research Unit at Ruskin College, Oxford, contains the confident assertion that the British Medical Association is the *only* organized body outside the Trades Union Congress (TUC) that has any significant "social bargaining power." This is a polite way of saying that no one else has the muscle to defend his interests, which indeed appears to be the case. The Labor government meets with the TUC in a special liaison committee. It *negotiates* with the TUC; it merely *consults* with the Confederation of British Industry. British trade-union leaders—most of whom are elected by fewer than 10 per cent of their members, some of whom are elected for life, and many of whom are openly committed to the overthrow of the mixed economy—enjoy a privileged social status and legal immunities that are not shared by any other social group. Hence the nickname that was recently conferred on them: the "new barons."

I could go on with my list of "Third World" symptoms. Any recent visitor to Britain will have examples of his own to contribute. Britain is fast becoming an offshore industrial slum, where most executives earn less than a good secretary in Washington, D.C., and where the good things of life, although increasingly beyond the reach of an overtaxed, underpaid middle class, are so cheap that Frenchmen and Germans come over on organized shopping sprees. The British have not as yet developed a "gringo" complex, but maybe that, too, is coming: the Arabs, who look different, talk different, and spend sterling as if it were confetti, may turn out to be Britain's gringos.

One of the more depressing aspects of this transformation of Britain is the decline of civility in everyday life: service is a rarity in shops and restaurants, wholly unknown in state-run industries, and something that affluent foreigners too frequently encounter only as a pimpish determination to fleece them.

The most sinister aspect, however, is the spread of political violence from the embattled province of Northern Ireland (where it continues to be financed by misguided Irish Americans) to the metropolis itself. The murder of Ross McWhirter, a man who believed that the responsible citizen should take action when governments fail to do their duty, and who therefore set up a private reward scheme for information leading to the arrest and conviction of terrorist bombers, marked an important stage in Britain's national decline. He was shot at his own doorstep by IRA gunmen on November 27, 1975.

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WHAT is wrong with Britain? Where will the process end? These are urgent questions, and they deserve a serious and detailed answer. Perhaps even now it is not fully understood by Britain's allies that its internal condition poses perhaps the single most serious threat to the Atlantic Alliance—although that may have become a little clearer when, in mid-December, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that further cuts in the defense budget (totaling £300 million) would be made over the next two years. Britain's armed forces, when fully mobilized, were already smaller than those of neutral Sweden, Switzerland, and even Finland.

But if Britain is acquiring some of the social and economic characteristics of a Third World country, the most critical question of all is: will it end up with a Third World political setup as well —with a politburo or a junta?

In trying to answer this question, let me begin with a proposition that may appear absurd, or at any rate exaggerated, to most American readers. It is that Britain has traveled more than two-thirds of the way toward becoming a fully communist society, and that it is increasingly probable that it will either complete the journey or have to endure the most shattering social and constitutional crisis the country has known since the 17th century.

Note that I am using the word communism with a small c, in the exact sense that it is used in the original text: the 1848 *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, by Marx and Engels. Remember that the authors of that pamphlet suggested that communist theory could be summed up in a single sentence, as "abolition of private property." They also suggested ten measures that might be employed to achieve communism in more advanced countries. Two years ago, Lord Chalfont examined the list (in a television program for which the Left will never forgive him) and concluded that about half the measures proposed had already been applied in Britain. Reexamining the list, I put the proportion rather higher; and the measures that have not been applied so far are part of the program of the Labor party and the Trades Union Congress.

IT MAY be helpful to run quickly through the list.

Item 1 is the "abolition of property in land." Well, it is not yet *illegal* to own a private estate in Britain, but increased taxation has made it ruinous to maintain one.

Item 2 is "a heavy progressive or graduated income tax." There is no doubt on that score; tax levels in Britain rise to a maximum of 83 per cent on earned income and 98 per cent on what is officially classified as "unearned" income. There are plans afoot for a wealth tax as well. The Labor government, with a precarious majority of one in the House of Commons and plenty to worry about on other fronts, decided to shelve that proposal last December, but was firmly recalled to its socialist duty by the TUC, which compelled it to set up an official working party.

Item 3 is the "abolition of all right of inheritance." This has been three-quarters achieved through death duties and taxation, and will no doubt be fully achieved if present trends continue.

Item 4 is the "confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels." You are still allowed to take *something* with you if you decide to flee England's shores, but the maximum amount that a permanent emigrant can take out initially is not enough to support a family for a year. Another run on sterling and a further mass emigration of professionals (some 65,000 left in 1975) might bring that ceiling down even lower.

Item 5 is the "centralization of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly." Through the Bank of England, the British government enjoys far-reaching powers to control credit and monetary expansion. But of course Marx and Engels were calling for more than that. So is the official Labor-party program, approved by 5,883,000 votes (to a pitiful 122,000 against) at the annual conference in Blackpool last year. This document calls, *inter alia*, for the nationalization of the major clearing banks and insurance companies. So we might say that Item 5 is coming up on the agenda.

Item 6: "Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the state." This was achieved long ago in Britain, with the creation of state monopolies in these areas—including the post-office monopoly whose performance induced a Labor MP, Arthur Lewis, to say that it will soon be quicker to drop your letters in the gutter and hope that some altruistic passer-by will deliver them for you than to rely on the post office.

Item 7: "Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the state." No doubt about that one, either. The state takeover of private firms is proceeding apace, and the sheer weight of government intervention in the British economy can be grasped at once from a simple statistic: public spending represents 63 per cent of the gross national product. To put it more crudely, out of every £100 that are spent in Britain, £63 are spent by the government sector. I can find no other example of a non-communist society where government intervention has gone so far. John Maynard Keynes himself once said that the maximum desirable level of public spending was 25 per cent of the GNP. Beyond that, a society must begin to tremble for its freedom. Yet the appetite for still more government intrusion and intervention has not been slaked. Late last year, the chairman of the general purposes committee of the Labor-controlled Greater London Council circulated a study paper which proposed that professional football teams should be placed under the control of local councils, on the grounds that this

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would be a good way to get rid of "reactionary" managers and "democratize" the sport. Now that so many industries have been brought under state control, perhaps it is not entirely astonishing that the nationalizers have turned their attention to leisure.

But let us consider the last three items in the decalogue of the *Communist Manifesto*.

Item 8: "Equal liability of all to labor; establishment of industrial armies." The power of the leaders of organized labor in Britain today—and their power to conscript new recruits under recent closed-shop legislation—leaves me in no doubt that Marx's "industrial armies" already exist. Britain has not succeeded in making everyone work for a living. On the contrary, the excesses of the welfare state have encouraged widespread parasitism. But back in 1848, Marx and Engels were no doubt thinking about squeezing out the capitalist and the *rentier,* and both species certainly seem to be heading for extinction in Britain.

Item 9 reads rather strangely today: "Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country." This can surely be said to have come about, but can hardly be said to have been decisive for Marx's broader design except in one sense: the dwindling of the farming community (now only 4 per cent of the British work force) has added to the power of industrial and public-service unions. The voice of the farmer is barely heard in British life, and so one of the elements that is crucial to a system of social checks and balances in other societies is missing here.

The tenth and last item in the communist decalogue: "Free education for all children in public schools." Well, of course. But British socialism has improved on the *Communist Manifesto*. The Labor government has set out to impose a uniform type of state school, the comprehensive. It is closing down grammar schools (what in America would be called public academic high schools)—although it has run up against determined last-ditch resistance from local parents—and intends to cut off all forms of state support for private schools of every kind. It even appears to have been won over to the notion that the cause of equality requires a "fair" distribution of intellect among schools, which is to be achieved by sharing out brighter students on a quota basis. This remarkable scheme, politely known as "banding," would amount to a British arrangement for busing—based on IQ instead of color.

Six of the ten conditions for achieving communism that were laid down by Marx and Engels thus appear to be in the bag in Britain (Items 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10). The remaining four conditions can hardly be said to be remote. One (the nationalization of credit) is part of the program of the ruling party. Another two (1 and 3) will be as good as fulfilled if current proposals for a radical wealth tax are allowed to proceed. And the confiscation of their property is perhaps one of the last things that "rebels" would need to worry about (Item 4) if any were so rash as to rear their heads after the other foundations for communism have been securely laid.

IF, THEN, we accept that what Marx and Engels published in 1848 provides a workable definition of "communism," we are compelled to conclude that Britain has already acquired some of the definitive characteristics of a communist society—*despite the fact that there is not a single overt member of the Communist party sitting in the House of Commons.* This brings me at once to the distinction only hinted at so far: between communism with a small c and Communism with a capital C.

In Britain, many people who have been laboring to bring about communism with a small c for many decades do not regard themselves as communists or even Marxists and do not belong to avowedly Marxist organizations. Suckled by Harold Laski and R. H. Tawney, they honestly believe that they are working in the cause of social justice, equality, or (quite simply) the "labor movement," and that history is laid out before them as a single linear progression toward more and more public ownership and the abolition of class differences through the redistribution of incomes and opportunities. They may be only dimly aware, if at all, that theirs is a quest which will lead, if successful, to the death of personal freedom and the abolition of the individual's right to use his talents for his own purposes.

This mentality is now predominant within the British Labor party. It is symptomatic that the "moderate" lobby within the party is known as the Manifesto Group. The manifesto on which the party was elected in 1974 ends with the following commitment: "Our objective is to bring about a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power in favor of working people and their families." It may be that for the "moderates," the manifesto is the *limit* of their commitment to socialism. But for others in the party, it seems to be no more than the starting point.

Left-wing spokesmen within the party have recently taken to calling themselves "democratic socialists" as distinguished from "social democrats." This apparently arbitrary play on words is actually quite revealing. A "democratic socialist" is a socialist first and a democrat second; whereas with a "social democrat," it is the other way around. In a savage little article in *Tribune* (the paper of the Labor Left) Hugh Jenkins, MP, recently heaped ridicule on "social-democrat" colleagues who acted as if "Parliament is the end, not the means" and as if "parliamentary government is good in itself, irrespective of what it does or does not do." Mr. Jenkins, of course, has a point. Parliamentary institutions *are* means, not ends. The purpose of political institutions should be to safe-

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guard the freedom of the individual and the family within a secure, orderly, and just society. But that, I fear, was not what he meant. Mr. Jenkins's end is a form of "socialism" indistinguishable from the system outlined in Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto*—a system that would make democracy obsolete since, once established, it is intended to be irreplaceable. From this perspective, democracy is regarded as useful and desirable only so long as it provides the means to bring about a British version of communism. Once that is achieved, you can forget about democracy.

Now it is true that someone like Hugh Jenkins does not speak for the majority of his colleagues in the parliamentary Labor party, and still less for the bulk of his party's supporters in the country (who in turn represented only 29 per cent of those entitled to vote and 39 per cent of those who did vote at the last election). But as they never tire of pointing out, the "democratic socialists" are now the dominant voice within the "Labor movement"—which means the party's annual conference, its national executive committee, its most important subcommittee, and, above all, the commanding heights of the trade-union movement. They have also profited from the attitude of *pas d'ennemis à gauche* ("no enemies to the Left") which has been adopted by most of their more moderate colleagues. The best example of how deep that attitude has gone was the visit, last October, of Boris Ponomarev, the head of the international department of the central committee of the Soviet Communist party.

Ponomarev came to London at the invitation of the Labor party—to be specific, at the invitation of its international committee, in which the key figure is Ian Mikardo. It was a remarkable occasion. To begin with, the British Labor party had recognized, as a "fraternal" colleague, a Soviet party official who had been directly implicated in the Stalinist purges (he wrote the *Pravda* editorial which foreshadowed the show trials of 1937) and had earned successive promotions, within the Comintern and the Cominform, under the great tyrant. Second, it had picked upon the man directly responsible for subversive operations throughout Western Europe and, for that matter, the entire non-Communist world, the man who issues marching orders to local Moscow-line parties. Finally, what was supposedly a party-to-party occasion took on the aspect of a governmental visit. Ponomarev was received both by the Prime Minister and by the Foreign Secretary.

As it turned out, the Ponomarev visit produced a public uproar. He was greeted in the streets by angry demonstrations, organized by the Jewish community, various groups of East European exiles, the National Association for Freedom, and the Social Democratic Alliance. He beat a hasty retreat from the visitors' gallery at the House of Commons when Conservative MP's initiated a major debate in which Nicholas Ridley leaped to his feet to deliver the archaic cry, "I spy strangers!"—the cue for a vote on whether the public galleries should be cleared. Still, very few Labor MP's spoke out against the Ponomarev visit. (Greville Janner was a notable exception.) However many may have felt privately uneasy about this public linkage between the Labor party and the Soviet Communist party, few were ready to rock the boat in public. This widespread refusal in the Labor ranks to draw an absolute distinction between social democracy and totalitarian Communism has been extraordinarily propitious, both for the party's "democratic socialists" and for the people who can accurately be described as "infiltrators."

Some light has been cast into that murky corner in the recent debate over allegations of pro-Soviet sympathies within the parliamentary Labor party, and over the appointment of a Trotskyist militant, Andy Bevan, as the Labor party's national youth organizer. Lists have been produced of Labor MP's who regularly write for the Communist *Morning Star*, speak on Communist platforms, take part in Communist-front organizations like the British Peace Council or the Chile Solidarity Committee, or spend their holidays by the Baltic Sea.

"There have always been Reds in the Labor party. I can't understand what all the fuss is about." That is how Sid Bidwell, past chairman of the Tribune Group and formerly active in a Trotskyist organization, described such goings-on in a recent exchange with the young Winston Churchill (spokesman on defense for the Tories). A member of the present government, the Energy Secretary, Tony Benn, provided a more reasoned defense of the same viewpoint in a paper defending Bevan's appointment, which was published in the *Guardian* in December after the party headquarters declined to distribute the text.

Benn argues that it is an "indisputable historical fact" that "Marxism has, from the earliest days, always been openly accepted as one of many sources of inspiration within our movement." While the Labor party has refused to admit members of other "socialist" parties who run candidates against the official Labor candidates in elections, "never since the earliest days of the Labor movement has Marxism itself been regarded as a disqualification for party membership." In a curious peroration Benn concludes that "the influences that lead individuals to embrace democratic socialism have always been left to the individual conscience, and there are no inquisitions to root out Marxism any more than there are to root out Catholics, atheists, or followers of Adam Smith, Sigmund Freud, Leon Trotsky, or Milton Friedman." I have yet to discover a rising star in the British Labor party who is a disciple of Smith or Friedman, and I doubt whether Benn seriously believes that they have anything to contribute to the cause of "democratic socialism."

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Benn's defense of the *carrière ouverte aux idéologies* is singularly revealing. He is so little interested in the argument that there is a line to be drawn between those who are willing to work within the limits of a parliamentary democracy and those who wish to overthrow it that he does not even refer to it. He jeers at the Conservative editorialist who suggested that the appointment of a Trotskyist to the Labor-party headquarters is comparable to what would have been the case if a Nazi had been appointed to the Tory Central Office in the 1930's, but then gives the game away by quoting Andy Bevan's description of himself and the faction linked with the radical weekly *Militant*. "We proudly describe ourselves as Marxists," Bevan declares, "and what we mean by that is that we stand on the traditions of Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky."

Now it may or may not have been forgotten by Benn, but Lenin was the man who closed down an infant parliamentary democracy in Russia, and Trotsky was the man who helped him to impose a new form of serfdom on the country by force of arms. For a leading official of the British Labor party (since confirmed in his appointment, despite objections from the party's professional staff) to say that he stands "on the tradition" of the Bolshevik revolution really *is* rather like a comparable Conservative figure proudly announcing that he "stands on the tradition" of the March on Rome.

Perhaps this example is enough to demonstrate the extent to which British socialism has succumbed to what Jean-François Revel has called the "totalitarian temptation." But the case of Andy Bevan is more than an example of the assimilation of a revolutionary communist ideology. It shows, clear as a warning flare, the growing influence of revolutionary *organizations* within a mass party whose remaining social democrats have, at best, been flaccid in the defense of their own beliefs. Dr. Stephen Haseler, a Labor member of the Greater London Council and one of the founders of the Social Democrat Alliance, describes his fellow social democrats as "men with the stuffing knocked out of them."

Andy Bevan is a living symbol of the success in Britain of the tactic that the Trotskyists call "entryism" or "deep entry." According to figures supplied by Labor-party headquarters, there are about a thousand Trotskyists actively working within ten of the eleven regional organizations of the party. They have been particularly effective within the Labor Party Young Socialists (LPYS), where Andy Bevan first rose to prominence, and within local constituency associations, where they have placed the seats of moderate Labor MP's in jeopardy through a series of well-organized putsches. Many of the Trotskyists working with the Labor party are associated with the *Militant* and with the shadowy Revolutionary Socialist League, a clandestine group whose aim is to penetrate and manipulate the Labor party at every level. The success of this group within the LPYS has been all but complete. Of the Young Socialists' eighteen regions, seventeen are Marxist-dominated. The West Midlands region is not under Marxist control, but seven of the Young Socialists' eleven branches in the city of Birmingham are controlled by *Militant* supporters. It is worth noting that the aims of the *Militant* include "the abolition of armed forces of any kind as soon as possible" with the single proviso that "as long as capitalism exists, so will workers' militias, to defend the workers" (Kevin Ramage in the *Militant*, August 29, 1975).

The Labor party has not been organized to resist this kind of infiltration, although warnings have been issued by its national agent, Reg Underhill, and, very late in the day, by its former leader, Sir Harold Wilson. It has been clear all along to any intelligent revolutionary in Britain that the road to power lies through the penetration of the labor movement, since the openly Marxist parties have always been contemptuously rejected by the electorate; the Communist party counts itself lucky if it can pull in 0.3 per cent of the votes in a general election. Even more than the Labor party, the trade unions have been the prime target. Today, the TUC overshadows the British Parliament and might, indeed, be regarded as the *de facto* upper house. No major decision is made by the government without consulting the TUC.

Indeed, the most powerful man in Britain is not an elected member of Parliament, not even the prime minister. It is Jack Jones, the leader of Britain's biggest labor union, the Transport and General Workers' Union. Although, by contrast with some of his rowdier colleagues, Jones appears to be regarded by many people in Britain as a relative "moderate," he made his own aspirations rather plain in June last year, when he visited East Germany and told a press conference that he felt "at home" in East Berlin. Jones is certainly not a crusader for the mixed economy, and anyone who lives in Britain must feel green with envy at the contrast between a union federation which promotes "fraternal" contacts with the state labor managers and factory policemen of Eastern Europe, and the AFL-CIO which provides platforms for Solzhenitsyn. Jack Jones is due to retire in 1977, but it seems probable that his successor will be a man from the same mold.

TRADE-UNION power is *the* problem in Britain today, and it is exceedingly doubtful whether any other major problem can be solved until a solution is found for this one. The TUC has been praised, inside as well as outside Britain, for accepting voluntary wage curbs under the "social contract." But the price that has been paid for wage restraint has been an unprecedented expansion of the powers of the union leadership to dictate the government's overall economic pol-

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icy and to bring the non-unionized sections of the work force under its control.

Although the various schemes for accomplishing these objectives are often described as proposals for extending "workers' participation" and "industrial democracy," it must be borne in mind that in Britain the union leaders who are most voluble in the use of such terms are no shining examples of democracy at work. Most of them owe their jobs to a singularly undemocratic process which presents enormous opportunities for tiny groups of radical left-wingers to win disproportionate influence. This can be gauged immediately from the political affiliations of the 345 members of the executives of Britain's thirteen biggest unions. About fifty are open Communist-party supporters. Most of the others, except for a few Trotskyists and Maoists, are nominal Labor-party supporters—in many cases on the Marxist side of the party. None is a Conservative. Yet a Gallup poll taken in June 1975, when support for the two major parties was evenly matched in the country as a whole, revealed that while 49 per cent of union members intended to vote Labor, no fewer than 25 per cent intended to vote Conservative, and 10 per cent Liberal. The proportion who planned to vote Communist was a derisory 0.1 per cent.

Against this background, the constitutional threat that is posed by trade-union power in Britain can be seen in its true light. The most powerful union leaders in Britain are men who are openly bent on the destruction of "capitalism"—although the word is, to put it mildly, an unsatisfactory description of a mixed economy in which the role of the state looms larger than that of the private sector. Their self-confidence was greatly enhanced by the events of February 1974, when the Heath government, in an effort to break the miners' strike, called an election on the issue of "who governs the country?"—and lost. The toppling of the Heath government produced a continuing mood of defeatism among politicians and the business community, many of whom concluded that it is now impossible to govern Britain against the wishes of the men who control the TUC.

WHERE does Britain go from here? The year or two that lie ahead represent the most dangerous and challenging period in the country's postwar history, and the decisions that are made (or not made) over these months will determine whether or not Britain will survive as a democratic, pluralist society. It is anyone's guess who will govern the country over the next two years. If James Callaghan's government can cling to its hair's-breadth majority in the House of Commons, despite sickness and death, by-elections, and possible defections, it is conceivable that he might try to delay elections until 1978. By that time, according to the shamans of the British cargo cult, North Sea oil will be flowing in, and Britain's payments problems will at least be partly solved.

But what seems more likely is that Chancellor of the Exchequer Healey's patched-up compromise (between the minimum budget cuts that the IMF would swallow as a condition for extending more credit and the maximum that the TUC would accept) will fall apart early next year, provoking a new run on sterling. The government would then be under renewed pressure to cut its spending program and its borrowing requirement. If it agreed, the long-threatened revolt of the Labor Left might finally come about. That could lead either to new elections (which the Conservatives would probably win) or to an attempt to create a government of national unity, including Labor moderates, Conservatives, and Liberals.

I THINK that it is not an overstatement to say that, if either comes to pass, Britain will have its last chance to shore up the foundations of its economy and its parliamentary democracy before they are swept away by the flood. If a Conservative government were prevented from governing by the trade-union Left a second time around, the Tories would be a write-off in the eyes of the electorate, and the Labor party that would return to office would probably have lurched even farther to the Left—with a figure like Tony Benn as its leader. If a coalition government failed, the whole political establishment would be discredited, opening the way for a non-democratic "solution" from the Left or Right—more likely the former than the latter. And if *that* should come to pass, the consequences would not only be tragic for Britain; they would be disastrous for the Western world as a whole.

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Why the New Right Lost

Jeane Kirkpatrick

IN THE years between 1969 and 1975 Kevin Phillips, William A. Rusher, Patrick J. Buchanan, and Richard J. Whalen all wrote books* assessing the strengths, weaknesses, and prospects of the American conservative movement as they understood it and recommending strategy and tactics for 1976. These writers do not represent *the* conservative position—there is no such thing. Indeed, they are considered by some, especially among the "Old Right," not to be conservatives at all, but neo-populist pseudo-conservatives. Yet because they are articulate in formulating and vocal in justifying a position which has frequently lacked defenders among American intellectuals, their views have had an important influence on the way the conservative movement is perceived by other observers of American political life.

Although there are differences in approach, style, and strategy among these writers, they share certain qualities characteristic of what has come to be called the "New Right." Many of their perspectives are common to all conservatives: preoccupation with the nation's waning self-confidence; concern over the decline of such traditional values as discipline, restraint, consensus; rejection of guilt-ridden liberalism, of judicial decision-making, of social engineering, and burgeoning bureaucracy; commitment to patriotism and a strong national defense.

In addition, however, the New Right holds certain other beliefs which may or may not be shared by other conservatives. Among these are the idea that there exists in the electorate a hidden conservative majority; that the social division with the greatest potential political significance is not that between "haves" and "have-nots" but between the liberal elite and everybody else; that a realignment of the parties into two ideologically homogeneous groups is both desirable and likely; that the Republican party may not prove an effective institutional channel for the expression of truly conservative politics and should perhaps be abandoned; and that the principal obstacles to the conservative cause are the nation's media monopolies through whose "distorting lens" is filtered "almost every scrap of information Americans receive of their national government, its programs, policies and personalities" (Buchanan).

THE conviction that there exists out there in the electorate a permanent conservative majority is a basic article of faith for the new conservative intellectuals. Yet given the fact that George Wallace succeeded in winning only 13.6 per cent of the vote in 1968, and that Barry Goldwater—the only major party candidate to present himself unambiguously as the leader of a conservative coalition—was buried in Lyndon Johnson's 1964 landslide, the case for the existence of a conservative majority is not self-evident. It requires interpreting the notion of a conservative broadly, to include all persons who are attached to traditional values and conventional practices; *or* who are hostile to the bureaucratization of society; *or* who favor a strong military establishment, an anti-Communist foreign policy, and an aggressive defense of the national interest; *or* who stress liberty as against equality; *or* who desire to preserve the framers' vision of the constitutional system against transformation. Theorists of the hidden conservative majority do indeed count all such persons as conservatives. They also take comfort from the successive public-opinion polls which have revealed that when asked whether they are liberals or conservatives, the proportion of adults who describe themselves as conservative has increased, while the percentage of self-described liberals has declined. Thus, though conservatives still do not constitute a majority, they are considerably more numerous than liberals. The conservative advantage is further expanded when it is (dubiously) assumed, as Rusher for example does, that persons who are "undecided" as to whether they are liberal or conservative would divide in the same manner as persons with an opinion.

The preferred data on the existence of a conservative majority are the elections of 1968 and, especially, 1972. In his *The Emerging Republican*

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* *The Emerging Republican Majority* (1969) and *Mediacracy: American Parties and Politics in the Communications Age* (1975), by Kevin Phillips; *The Making of a New Majority Party* (1975), by William A. Rusher; *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories: Why the Right Has Failed* (1975), by Patrick J. Buchanan; *Catch a Falling Flag* (1972) and *Taking Sides: A Personal View of America from Kennedy to Nixon* (1974), by Richard J. Whalen.

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Majority (1969), Kevin Phillips described 1968 as a turning-point in the American party system comparable to 1828, 1860, 1896, and 1932. He argued that in Nixon's narrow victory against Humphrey the shape of the future could be discerned. Having fallen victim to "the ideological impetus of a liberalism which had carried it beyond programs taxing the few for the benefit of the many (the New Deal) to programs taxing the many on behalf of the few (the Great Society)," the Democratic party was being deserted by blue-collar ethnics and middle-income taxpayers. The result, Phillips argued, was an emerging Republican majority based "in the heartland of the South and California against a minority Democratic party based in the Northeast and the Pacific Northwest (and encompassing Southern as well as Northern Negroes)."

Gratifying as the outcome in 1968 was to theorists of the conservative majority, their pleasure in 1968 paled beside that of 1972—not because it brought a landslide for Richard Nixon, about whom they had great doubts, but because it seemed to them to have provided the electorate with a clear choice between ideologically distinct alternatives and to have resulted in a grand coalition of "conservatives." Never mind that Nixon had already (in Rusher's words) "systematically and cynically abandoned between 1969 and 1972 most of the conservative principles that justify participation in politics"; or that, as Whalen observed, the bureaucracy, terrified in 1968, had learned by 1972 that Nixon planned no dismantling of big government; or that Nixon had, in Buchanan's view, "made a conscious decision [after 1968] to shift leftward on domestic and social policy—to appease those who most opposed him." Despite all this, it was still possible for Rusher to conclude that in 1972 "the conservative majority, united at last, had won overwhelmingly," and for Buchanan to assert that "in the 'new majority' mustered together by President Nixon remain the constituent elements of conservative victory."

But faith in the existence of a conservative majority did not depend only on public-opinion data and electoral victories. More importantly, the theory rested on an interpretation of contemporary society which postulated "objective" social factors. Thus Kevin Phillips argued in *The Emerging Republican Majority* that while the old political alignment reflected a community of economic interests among the largely white urban working class and the South, the new alignment would reflect the heightened ethnic consciousness of Catholic and blue-collar voters, the greatly increased political role of blacks, and the conservative inclinations of the dramatically enlarged Sun Belt.

In the wake of the 1972 election, however, a new interpretation began taking shape which deemphasized demographic factors. What was now stressed instead was the emergence of a new sociocultural class structure and with it a new class struggle. This new class struggle—which was variously described as pitting "producers" against "non-producers" (Rusher's formulation), or as pitting a new liberal elite based in the "knowledge sector" against the working and middle classes (Phillips's formulation)—drew heavily on the theory of post-industrial society enunciated by Daniel Bell, Ralf Dahrendorf, and others. Common to all these formulations was a conviction that the economic divisions which traditionally separated the "haves" from the "have-nots" (and were reflected in the Roosevelt coalition) had been superseded by the rise of a privileged liberal elite whose interests as a group were said to be concealed and served in an ideology favorable to the transfer of more and more power from the private to the public sector. As Buchanan wrote:

> Is it not the liberals' artistic and academic friends who get the grants from the federal endowments for arts and humanities? Is it not journalists of their persuasion who are given the large salaries and big fees for pontificating on "public television"? Is it not their children [who are] lured by Vista and the Peace Corps, and selected for Reggie Heber Smith fellowships to work out their ideology in Legal Services? Is it not their Naderite collaborators who will wind up with the positions of authority in a new federal consumer protection agency? Has it not been the professional bureaucrats, planners, consultants, and professors whose power, prestige, and income have grown directly proportional to the growth in federal power the last decade and a half?

In a similar vein, by the time he wrote *Mediacracy* (1975), Kevin Phillips's version of a liberal establishment which served its private interests by promotion of "sociological jurisprudence, moral permissiveness, experimental residential, welfare, and educational programming, and massive federal spending" had been revised to emphasize the role of the "knowledge sector," especially "academicians, journalists, urban planners, consumer advocates, welfare workers, and related occupations."

The belief that there has appeared in American politics an intelligentsia (often called the New Class) hostile to bourgeois culture and institutional practices is, of course, shared by many persons not associated with the New Right. However, Lionel Trilling, Daniel Bell, Seymour Martin Lipset, Midge Decter, Michael Novak, and other intellectuals affiliated with the Democratic party who have emphasized the rising political importance of the New Class *do not identify it with the welfare state*. These Democratic intellectuals see an important distinction between traditional welfare-state politics which aim at providing all with a minimum share of economic well-being, respect, and political power, and the so-called New Politics, which aims less at the diffusion of power than

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its concentration in the hands of the New Class.

As conceived by the New Right, in any case, the new divisions between classes are based neither on an "objective" relation to the means of production (as Marx believed them to be), nor on disposable income and resources, but on occupation and culture. While occupation does not determine culture (else Phillips, Buchanan, Rusher, Whalen, and their allies would themselves all be members of the liberal elite), persons associated with the knowledge sector and the bureaucracy are seen as the likely carriers of post-industrial morality and elitist politics, and as hostile to the interests and values of workers, businessmen, and farmers who are still engaged in the production of material goods and the frank pursuit of material advantage.

In this clash of cultural perspectives, no group is thought to have greater importance than the "media monopolists," or "media moguls" of the Washington-New York axis in whose hands rests the power to focus attention, filter information, set the nation's agenda, make and break politicians. By 1970 hostility to "big media" had become a basic tenet of most conservatives and was held with special intensity by the New Right. The progressive concentration of power in the major networks and wire services and the growing number of one-newspaper cities had, it was argued, given control over the formulation and distribution of news into the hands of "a small group of men," in Agnew's famous characterization, who "decide what forty to fifty million Americans will learn of the day's events in the nation and the world." From the point of view of the New Right, the danger of such a concentration of power was rendered even greater by the liberal perspective of the media moguls which focused on negative and problematic aspects of the society, manufactured endless "crises," and eroded confidence in the nations' institutions and leaders.

OBVIOUSLY, the class divisions described by Rusher, Phillips, and Buchanan have a great deal in common with those postulated and exploited by George Wallace. There is hardly—as Wallace might have put it—a dime's worth of difference between Rusher's elite bent on busing at any price, or Buchanan's man of government who wants mass transit instead of automobiles because "that would mean government, rather than individuals, would dictate how people travel in America," and George Wallace's pointy-headed bureaucrats whose spendthrift schemes squander the taxes of working people to finance unworkable programs which, instead of solving problems, compound them.

Indeed, the theorists of the New Right noted what many liberal commentators, eager to dismiss the Wallace movement as racism, ignored: that the appeal of George Wallace grew out of the same process of cultural and social polarization which fed the candidacies of Eugene McCarthy and George McGovern. Out of that process of polarization, which drew into the political arena questions of morals and of legitimacy on which there has traditionally been broad consensus, two extreme positions developed: a McGovernite Left closely associated with the counterculture, and a Wallaceite Right committed to a comprehensive defense of the traditional culture. On this spectrum, voters were not arrayed according to their views of the welfare state, but on the basis of their attitudes toward the traditional society and culture. It was Wallace who, in 1968 and 1972, mounted the most aggressive, unembarrassed defense of nationalism, patriotism, law and order, and the work ethic, as well as of that other darker underside of the traditional culture—white racism. Wallace's success in attracting portions of the white working class was surprising only to those who *assumed* that the political world could be placed on a political spectrum dominated by economic issues. But the postulated "new" conservative majority which integrated neo-populist Wallaceites and Republican business perspectives could come into being if and only if the economic issues on which the traditional political cleavages were based remained less salient than the social and cultural issues of the late 60's. Theorists of the New Right believed that the cultural cleavages were here to stay.

Here, then, was an opportunity to build a new ideologically homogeneous party uniting all those who considered themselves conservatives in a grand alliance against those who considered themselves liberals. The intellectuals of the New Right were attracted to the idea of a new party because most of them were, and are, extremely ambivalent in their feelings about the Republican party. Interested above all in an institutional vehicle for the expression of conservative principles, they were offended by the continuing presence in the Republican party of a liberal minority which, ideologically speaking, belonged on the other side, by party professionals who in their relative unconcern with ideology belonged on no side, and by upper-class devotees of the "Old Right" who had as much in common with the liberal elite as with the conservative masses. Why, asked the New Right intellectuals, should the Republican party attract the loyalty of less than a fourth of the electorate when nearly half of all adult Americans considered themselves conservatives? Why should it fail to attract new voters—even those not attracted to the Democrats? Why could it not hold the support of those Southerners and Catholics and blue-collar voters who had crossed party lines to support Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, and even, in the Deep South, Barry Goldwater?

To Phillips and Rusher, the answer was that the Republican party was contaminated—by liberals, opportunists, ideologically neutral professionals, and crooks—and was a likely candidate for extinction. Rusher advocated a "new, broadly based

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major party" which would be called the "Independence" party and would include the "populist" followers of George Wallace and the "conservative" Republicans. Richard J. Whalen thought that conservatives might be more comfortable in a Democratic party led by Henry Jackson. Kevin Phillips, who is sometimes described as "hating" the Republican party, expressed doubt about the capacity of either party to adapt to continuing social changes, and noted that the functions of parties were, in any case, being progressively taken over by the communications industry. Even Patrick J. Buchanan, the most "Republican" of the leading conservative intellectuals, thought it possible that "when the crunch comes in the summer of 1976" conscience might require conservatives to abandon the GOP in favor of a third party which would state the conservative case in an unambiguous and aggressive fashion. Buchanan, however, also reminded his readers of the dangers of rule-or-ruin politics, and noted that the refusal to support an inadequately conservative Republican party would probably result in the election of more liberal Democratic candidates.

New Right theorists and conservative intellectuals of activist bent approached the 1976 presidential season with plans and determination. Conservative sectarianism intensified, organizations and committees crystallized around the candidacies and potential candidacies of Ronald Reagan, George Wallace, John Connally, and Gerald Ford. The American Conservative Union, the Young Americans for Freedom, and the *Human Events* and *National Review* "crowds" joined the Reagan campaign; most of the Republican leadership—including even Barry Goldwater, John Tower, and, eventually, Mississippi's Clark Reed—supported the nomination of Gerald Ford; and Wallace loyalists rallied behind Wallace.

But the hopes for a "pure" conservative party died as George Wallace dropped out of contention, as Ronald Reagan lost his bid for the Republican nomination, and, finally, as Lester Maddox and his segregationist allies captured control of the American Independent party. No new party emerged, no realignment took place, the Grand Coalition of white working-class Democrats and middle-class Republicans fell apart, the Sun Belt was split down the middle as the South went home to the Democrats, the conservative majority did not materialize, and even Gerald Ford was ultimately defeated. What happened constitutes, in itself, an instructive critique of the New Right theory of American politics.

This theory is mistaken, first, because it is based on an oversimplified conception of ideology in contemporary American politics; second, because it overestimates the electorate's ideological inclinations; and third, because it misunderstands the nature of political organization. Each of these errors helps to explain why the expectations of the New Right intellectuals were disappointed in 1976 and also why their disappointment is probably a chronic condition.

It seems quite clear that at least three dimensions have been involved in American politics over the last decade: an economic dimension which includes attitudes toward private property, the distribution of wealth, private ownership, and governmental control; a cultural dimension which includes attitudes toward tradition, order, authority, the deferral of gratification, and the moral bases for the allocation of resources; and a foreign-policy dimension which includes attitudes toward nationalism, defense and the use of force, the Third World, and détente and related matters.

Most of the political debate of recent decades has involved the economic dimension, which was, of course, central to the New Deal alignment. From the entry of the U.S. into World War II until roughly 1966, a "bipartisan" foreign policy kept most questions of foreign relations and defense out of the political sphere, much as widespread consensus on the legitimacy of government and the public order precluded serious debate on these questions outside the little magazines and the fringe press. From World War II to the collapse of the Vietnam consensus, American politics *was* virtually unidimensional and the liberal/conservative spectrum measured the kind of more/less questions which can be compromised in such a fashion that everyone gets something of value. The result was a style of "marketplace" or "broker" politics which conformed to the expectations of the Founding Fathers and to which the system was admirably suited.

The 60's changed all that by introducing questions of culture and of foreign policy into the electoral sphere. Popular reaction to the disorders of the late 60's—urban rioting, student rioting, massive violent protests and demonstrations, draft evasion—made it unambiguously clear that a large majority of American adults are conservative in the sense that they are attached to the existing society and will support it against challenges to its legitimacy. Nixon's 1972 landslide surely did demonstrate the presence of such a majority, but *only* as against a candidate who was perceived as the spokesman for a counterculture and at a time when violent assaults were being mounted against the existing social and political order. Under other circumstances—such as obtained, for example, in 1976—whether a voter votes his "conservative" views on a particular question will depend on its salience in a given contest as compared with other issues, on the ideological clarity of the choice offered in the election, and on the pull of non-ideological factors like personality, regionalism, and party.

Most of the misunderstanding concerning what it is to be a liberal or conservative today grows out of the attempt to treat this multidimensional political universe as though it all hung together. Yet

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while it is possible to find persons who take "conservative" positions on every issue (assuming one can decide what a conservative position *is* on every issue), both public-opinion data and electoral behavior make it entirely clear that a great many voters support an active role for government in the economic sphere, oppose challenges to the authority of government, distrust the Soviet Union and support a strong defense posture, or adopt some other combination of "liberal" and "conservative" positions.

The New Right belief that the large majorities who support traditional values and practices would vote conservative in presidential elections if only the conservative candidate provided adequate leadership, might be correct if all elections featured one candidate who identified with a sectarian attack on the traditional social order and another who came to its defense. But most elections do not and cannot be expected to gratify the New Right by offering so easy a contest.

THE New Right theory of politics is not only wrong because it assumes that people who are conservative on one issue are "conservatives"; it also errs in assuming that voters are more ideological than they in fact are.

Those who believe in the conservative majority argue that it can be mobilized for the purposes of electoral victory by a leadership that articulates the "basic" disagreements separating liberals and conservatives in our time. Ronald Reagan has stated this position repeatedly in the post-election period, arguing that the Republican party can be revitalized only as its leaders commit it to a clear-cut conservative position. And Buchanan counsels: "Conservatives should seek out, not avoid, political conflict with liberals of both parties. . . .We have nothing to lose by confrontation politics."

Experience with this strategy ought to be more discouraging than it is to the advocates of ideological polarization. It is an undeniable *fact* that each party has tried the strategy out in the recent past, and that the two candidates—Goldwater and McGovern—who provided the desired kind of leadership were overwhelmingly defeated by opponents who advocated and practiced consensus politics. The "moral" of the Goldwater and McGovern debacles is not that the American electorate is neither as "conservative" as Barry Goldwater nor as "liberal" as George McGovern, but that the voters will repudiate candidates who offer a narrowly ideological rhetoric and a divisive appeal.

The desire for ideologically homogeneous, disciplined, cohesive parties; for campaigns which pose a clear choice between mutually exclusive programs; for leaders who "stand for" ideas—all this flies in the face of the voters' proclivity to choose their leaders not simply because of the "ideas" they represent, but because of the kind of men they are or seem to be, the party labels under which they run, and the kind of men they are running against. Neither does it take account of the ideological complexity of the political world, and the ideological cross-pressures which derive from the variety of roles any individual voter may play (occupational, regional, racial, religious, etc.).

The situation is further complicated by the fact that candidates are also likely to have complex ideological commitments and identifications themselves. Jimmy Carter was the prototype of such a candidate. The ideological ambiguity which characterizes his image to this day was a source of strength in both the primaries and the election. In Massachusetts, likely Democratic primary voters split almost evenly on whether Carter was a liberal (15 per cent thought so), a conservative (18 per cent believed this to be the case), or a moderate, as another 18 per cent thought; and Carter's supporters were also drawn from across the political spectrum (25 per cent conservative, 24 per cent liberal, 45 per cent moderate). In Florida, the pattern was similar: 19 per cent of likely Democratic primary voters thought of him as conservative, and 22 per cent as a liberal. Although the selection of Senator Mondale as his running mate, and other openings to the Left, persuaded a good many voters of Carter's liberalism, substantial uncertainty concerning his ideological identity persisted through the campaign. The New York *Times*/CBS poll revealed that, early in the nominating contest, roughly equal portions of a nationwide sample of voters perceived Carter as liberal and conservative (20 per cent each), while 30 per cent perceived him as a moderate. As the campaign developed, the number of people who believed him a liberal rose to 37 per cent, but 28 per cent and 19 per cent respectively continued to see him as a moderate and a conservative. Carter's narrow electoral success obviously owed a great deal to his ability to preserve a conservative-to-moderate image among the Democratic identifiers who see themselves as moderate or conservative, while at the same time consolidating the support of Democratic liberals.

Finally, the New Right theorists misunderstand the nature of political organization. Like their counterparts on the Left, these conservative theorists seem to believe that organizations can and should be only vehicles for the expression of political ideas. But in fact, students of organizational behavior know that all political organizations have some characteristics and requirements independent of ideology, that a variety of skills and temperaments are needed to perform their functions, that they can be maintained only as people develop attachments to the organization itself.

Research has established that the party regular is attached to politics by social as well as ideological incentives (and sometimes also by material incentives) and that such attachment encourages the virtues of the good team member: cooperation, perseverence, loyalty, service, and the will to

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win. The ideological perspective, in contrast, is hostile to the construction and maintenance of organizational solidarity, for several reasons: first, because persons attached to politics by ideology do not identify themselves with organizations but with a point of view, and their commitment to organizations is therefore weak, instrumental, conditional; second, because persons attracted to politics by ideological incentives tend to hold relatively extreme and intense views and to have relatively comprehensive ideological orientations which encourages them to see particular questions as part of larger wholes. This in turn means that virtually any policy or issue can be perceived as involving "fundamental" questions of conscience which cannot be compromised without a sacrifice of "principle."

The ideological perspective in politics thus breeds intolerance of diversity, impatience with compromise, and the kind of intransigence characteristic of sectarian, rule-or-ruin politics. Ideological purists encounter persistent and probably insurmountable difficulties in building institutions through which to achieve their political goals, not only because their clearly defined programs cannot attract more than a minority, but also because their inclinations and habits are the opposite of those required to maintain large, inclusive democratic political organizations.

The intellectuals of the New Right understand, at least in theory, that compromise is required if a majority coalition is to be assembled: Rusher in particular stresses this point. But the difficulties they and their followers have displayed in accepting actual compromises with Republican loyalists like Gerald Ford who share *most* of their conservative views, provide little reason to suppose that hypothetical compromises with Wallaceites would prove more palatable if they ever became a concrete possibility.

THERE are some suggestive similarities between the theory of the New Right and the theory espoused by votaries of the New Politics at the other end of the political spectrum. The hidden conservative majority has its analogue in the army of the alienated—the poor, the young, the oppressed, the idealistic, the Wallaceites, the elderly—whom McGovern expected to rally behind his banner. The New Right version of class struggle based on "producers" and "non-producers" (or some functional equivalent) is a mirror image of the division postulated by the New Politics between the comfortable and the smug on the one hand, and the alienated and their champions on the other. There is, furthermore, general agreement about the geo-cultural bases of these classes: both Kevin Phillips and Kirkpatrick Sale have located the Left in Wasp New England and the nation's major universities, and the Right in the culturally conservative, demographically ascendant Sun Belt. (Sale termed these groups the Yankees and the Cowboys.) And there is, finally, in the case both of the New Right and the New Politics, an imperviousness to empirical disproof. Defeat of their position never demonstrates that the putative hidden majority does not in fact exist; it only proves that the cause was sabotaged by the media and betrayed or at least failed by its leaders. The belief in a hidden majority, indeed, puts an especially heavy burden on leadership, while sustaining partisans in the face of repeated losses and providing a sense of solidarity with "the people."

But there are also interesting parallels between the New Right in 1972-76 and the "Radical Right" associated with the late Senator Joseph McCarthy. As analyzed by Daniel Bell, Richard Hofstadter, Nathan Glazer, Seymour Martin Lipset, and others, the Radical Right of the 1950's was itself the product of a "new politics" which cut across partisan and ideological alignments, uniting persons of diverse economic interests in a novel coalition based on shared "status aspirations" and "status anxieties" against liberals, left-wingers, intellectuals, conformists, suspected and real Communists.

While these analysts of the Radical Right sometimes sounded embarrassingly like embattled defenders of a threatened aristocracy (the Radical Right was, they thought, a revolt by lower- and middle-class Americans against their betters), and while at other times they wrote as though major strains of American history were some kind of disease (there was much talk of authoritarian personalities, projections, and paranoia), they did not dismiss the new dissidents as insignificant. Instead, they saw the Radical Right as, in Hofstadter's words, "one of the long waves of 20th-century American history and not a momentary mood."

To read such analyses today is to be reminded that the New Right is not really new at all, but represents a strain of nativist populism whose roots are deep in American history and which has already played a highly important role in American politics, especially in the South and Southwest. As such, it is no more likely to disappear from the contemporary political scene than it is to become the center of a new majority party. It will fail in its current version because of its hostility to another deeply rooted aspect of contemporary politics—the welfare state, whose benefits no majority in any democratic country has yet foresworn. Nevertheless, in one form or another, it will remain with us for a very long time to come.

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Jewish Sons

A Story

Annette Henkin Landau

It is 1972 and my son is making his way home from California. He has a B.A. in philosophy and has had a transcendental experience. In the hills beyond Palo Alto he has known the unnameable. He writes letters about this experience, but his handwriting is so poor that I cannot decipher them; he writes poems of such complex metaphor that I cannot understand them. Once he was a basketball star.

The journey is a slow one. He travels in a truck with many stops along the way, campgrounds, universities, rock festivals. He will arrive in due time, he tells us, and leave again for the Florida Keys. He feels the need of a vacation.

He arrives at three o'clock one August morning and he does not have a key. So he breaks open the back door, finds tools, repairs the damage, and spreads his sleeping bag on the floor of the den. In the morning I find him there and two more young men asleep on the back porch. One of them wakes up, drinks a pitcher of orange juice, and leaves. I never find out his name. A hitchhiker, possibly.

The other is Tom. He is younger than my son, a sophomore, lank-haired and bony, an unfinished farm boy. He has never been East before, my son is his guru. In July they camped on Tom's father's farm and my son speaks glowingly of his family, especially his grandmother, a waitress at the local diner, the realest person I have ever met, says my son.

The realest person he has ever met. What does that mean? That I am not real, that his father is not real? I feel a pang of jealousy.

I want to kiss my son and I do not want to. I want to cover him with great wet, noisy, hungry kisses and tearful hugs, the way my grandmother kissed me when I was a little girl. The way I hated. So, although it has been more than a year since I last saw him, I brush his cheek awkwardly, trying to convey by my restraint how I have longed for him. His beard scratches my cheek, fills me with wonder.

We offer to make up a bed for Tom on the porch. He doesn't need sheets or a pillow, a blanket is sufficient. He sleeps in his clothes and reads every night before he falls asleep. He is reading *Che!* He is polite and hungry, a satisfactory guest. I treat him to all my specialties, gazpacho, coq au vin, clam chowder. He eats. In the morning I go to work, my husband goes to work, and Tom and my son work on the truck. My neighbor's son comes over to help. There are numerous things that need to be done to the truck.

He doesn't have much to say, this son, and when he talks he mumbles. I am slightly deaf, it makes me tense not to understand him. So we have a little joke. Would you mind re-mumbling that, I say, and he obliges.

He and Tom have private jokes too. They have a lingo that is beyond me, a private language like two blacks at a white cocktail party. It has to do with pot, rock, Berkeley, cosmic consciousness. They play guitar together, mostly chords, and they sing syllables, fragments. When I empty the dishwasher at night they sit in the kitchen making jokes. I am tired of these incomprehensible jokes and I tune myself out. Pretty soon, they are giggling, high. Vee haf vays, my son is saying, of making you into soap. Oi pliz, says Tom, make me bedder a lampshade.

I straighten up, a glass in my hand. We don't make concentration-camp jokes in this house, I tell them. I hear my voice, shocked, up-tight, suburban.

Vee don't? Vy not? Giggling.

I try to tell them. My son is embarrassed at my behavior. There is no subject not fit for humor, he tells me grandly. He fills me in on Lenny Bruce and the human condition. With the exception of genocide, says my strangled voice, when civilization turned back, when an unspoken barrier was crossed, filling him in on Elie Wiesel. A difference in degree, says my son, improved technology. Everybody gets slaughtered sometime, mama, get cool.

Am I trembling? Suddenly we are talking about Vietnam, about Israel. Tom is saying My-Lai was no different, the Israeli slaughter of the Palestinians was also genocide. His voice is innocent and fervent.

I try to tell him, what? A hundred years of settlement, pioneering. Jewish imperialism, he says.

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Seven hundred years of Turks and British. He never heard of it. The Arabs who stayed are Israeli citizens. Propaganda.

Historical facts, I cry.

History is an illusion, says my son. Tom agrees. Nothing that happened before we were born is of consequence, we want only to right injustice.

How?

A secular state in Palestine, says Tom in great earnest, where all will be equal, all races and creeds will be treated with justice. His smooth clear cheeks glow.

Jews know what Arab justice is, I say bitterly.

Bullshit.

Is that supposed to be a reasonable answer? I am exasperated. Where are you hearing all this? You have never been to Israel, you don't know any history, you hardly even know any Jews, you are an ignoramus.

I know what Fawzi Rousan told me, says Tom excitedly. Fawzi is my friend, and when he tried to talk at UCLA they stamped and yelled and wouldn't let him speak.

Who wouldn't let him?

Fascist Socialist Zionist Pigs!

The glass flies out of my hand, strikes his face, and falls unbroken to the floor.

Ignorant Obnoxious Anti-Semite!

My son, white-faced, is on his feet. Violence, he mourns, violence from my hypocrite mother, who walked in peace marches at my side, who betrays the movement with her uncontrollable Western urge to destroy. You could have killed him, you could have cut his eye out.

I'm sorry it wasn't a knife, I say.

I go upstairs to wake my husband and tell him what has happened. I relate it badly. It sounds stilted, like a debate. My husband is upset. He loves his son and does not want him to leave. You shouldn't have done it, he says, now he will go away. I cry, but I cannot be sorry. There are more important things than my son, but I do not say that.

There is this zeal for Jews, a passionate sorrow for Jewish suffering that makes me need to defend positions I don't even agree with. I am vulnerable in argument when this passion overcomes me. Love, fear, the movement of ancient blood. I believe in survival, I believe in the covenant. My husband, Orthodox-trained, has different ambiguities. He seeks moments of spiritual enlightenment, but the synagogue always fails him, so he settles for oratory, heart-swelling cantillations, performances. All this seems vaguely Christological to me, un-Jewish.

In the morning a black depression is sitting on my chest. Where to begin? The fall of the Temple, the destruction of Jerusalem? The expulsion from England? From Spain? Dreyfus? Herzl? It is too complicated, history is an illusion, the Holocaust did not happen. It was a television show.

When I go downstairs I see that Tom is gone. He has taken his duffle bag, his guitar, and his copy of *Che!* The blanket is folded meticulously on the couch. I put it away and it is as if he has never been there.

I wonder about him. Where has he gone, who will feed him? He is penniless. I esteem the pride that makes him so free, and I am relieved that I do not have to face him.

Later, I find a letter. The letter is written in pencil on notebook paper. It covers four sides, no paragraphs. I can not stay anymore, he says, because my feelings are very hurt because I am not ante-simetic. Not because of the glass, the glass was nothing, but I was brought up to beleive that every person has to be judged by himself. I do not judge any person by his race, color, or creed, but only by what kind of person he or she is as a person. I am trying to understand your feelings because I know you are a victim of the times you lived in but those times are gone. Fawzi (a good person) explaned to me how the Arabs want there land to be a place for any race color or creed, not a place where a person has to be a certain religion or he is a second class citizen like in the United States (with the blacks, I mean). What was done was very unjust. To take the land from the Palestine people by military might. It was not right that the Zionists did not let him speak. Not that Hitler was right either. I would never say that.

It goes on and then there is a postscript: Thank you very much for being so nice to me, Jewish food is the best I ever ate.

I put the letter away. I cannot deal with such high-minded confusion. If it were a composition I would give it a D-minus.

I try to talk to my son. He walks away from me. I have disgraced him, I have caused the loss of his disciple, I am a social embarrassment to him. Don't talk to me, he says, don't talk to me about Jews, don't talk to me about Israel. If you ever want to see me again, shut up, he says.

At least he has left the door open. I wish I could make you understand, I say. How, he says bitterly, by making me watch newsreels of concentration camps like you did when I was a kid? Why did you do that? You knew I couldn't stand them, you gave me nightmares. Why did you do that?

I am shocked. I have no recollection of such an episode.

He stays two more days. The truck is not yet ready. I go to work and do not know if he will still be there when I return. He tells me nothing of his plans. I do not ask about Tom. Finally, on Saturday, the truck is ready. My neighbor's son helps him load it. I give him groceries and a coleus plant to decorate the truck. *L'chaim,* I say, but he doesn't answer and I know it won't live.

I see my neighbor standing in his yard and I

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walk down the street to talk to him. My neighbor is a huge, kind man, bearded, troubled, profane. He has a psychiatrist. His children have psychiatrists. The little bastard's been hiding in my basement, he tells me. My kids took him in when you threw him out.

I am astounded and I laugh. I had visions of him starving to death, I say. I was worried about him. He ran away.

He didn't run far, says my neighbor. You should have thrown him out, the little prick. Says to me why should I have it so good and his old man has to scratch for a living. Tells me all about injustice.

He thinks we're rich, I say, and I laugh again.

I told him if his fuckin old man worked his fuckin ass off like I do he'd be rich too.

Where is he now? I ask.

Down on the highway waiting for your son to pick him up. They're going to the Keys. Don't worry, kiddo, you didn't change their plans.

I walk back to my house. In the driveway my betrayer is locking the back panels of his truck. Tight-lipped, he does not look at me. I want to say goodbye, I say. Goodbye, he says.

The truck grinds gears, lumbers away, heading for the highway where my enemy is waiting. My tall skinny son is gone.

I think of my Litvak grandmother, tall and skinny too, her potato nose, her little blue eyes, her mouth spitting sibilants like needles on a string. It is Passover in Brownsville. There is a tin candelabrum, red and blue cut-glass cups for the children, cracked dishes, and the moldy smell I hate, crumbling house, clotted featherbed, red-eyed poodle. Next to my father at the head of the table sits a stack of shabby books. My grandmother fingers them hopefully. Around the table are my uncles, the dentist, the pharmacist, the pattern maker, the horse player, and their dolled-up wives. "Let's eat," says my socialist father. "Bring out the fish, mama," sing the uncles.

The books sit on the table, nobody opens them. Once I take a little peek. They are Hebrew books, I don't know how to read them.

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Third World Fantasies

Walter Laqueur

A RECENT visitor to a Scandinavian university, after a heated debate with a group of students who had complained bitterly about the lack of freedom in their own country and in the West in general, asked which country in the world they most admired. The answer was Albania. None of the students was familiar with conditions in Albania, none had been there or had the faintest wish to go, but Albania was nevertheless the name of their utopia.

This syndrome is of course not new. Throughout history men have hankered after the perfect society, and have often assumed wistfully that in some distant place it already existed or was at least coming into being. In our time Soviet Russia was once the mecca of such pilgrims, the place where not only a new social order but a new species of mankind was said to have been brought forth, free of selfishness and depravity, free of crime and even neurosis, perfect in every respect, lacking only the gift of immortality. Enthusiasm for the Soviet Union has waned in recent years, but not the need for political gods to worship. Attention has shifted to China and, to a lesser extent, North Korea and Cuba.

On the whole, reverence for China has never quite achieved the dimensions of the Soviet cult before World War II—partly because so few outsiders know Chinese or are in a position to compare the old China with the new; partly because whatever happens in China has seemed of limited relevance to the West; and partly because Chinese foreign policy, smacking too much of *Realpolitik*, has dampened the eagerness of many potential admirers. North Korea, with its cult of the individual centering on Kim-Il Sung, has not been an altogether satisfactory substitute either. Cuba at first seemed very attractive, but its glamor too has paled even in those circles which used to greet with ecstasy Castro's every speech. A repression that could be justified at the time of revolution has grown harsher and more stringent in Cuba, with estimates of the number of political prisoners ranging between 25,000 and 60,000, larger in either case than in all other Latin American countries combined; culturally the country has become a desert, with all manifestations of intellectual freedom rigorously suppressed; and as for Castro himself, if he is not just another Latin American *caudillo*, perhaps more gifted and more radical than most, he has certainly turned out to be far removed from his original image as the new revolutionary messiah.

After their disappointments elsewhere, seekers for inspiration are left with the Albanias of this world and some of the newly emerging countries. It is said that, once freed from foreign rule, these countries will find their own way toward a new dignity, a social and political order unencumbered by the inequities of a dying Western civilization. Though they are primitive, their very backwardness may well be their insurance against the evils which have led Western civilization along the road to perdition. Perhaps after all a light *will* come out of the East, a new form of community, a new quality of life, a new model providing fresh hope for mankind.

These notions, first voiced in the 1950's, have taken some hard knocks in the intervening decades, but are by no means dead—as is shown dramatically in a new book by L. S. Stavrianos, Adjunct Professor of Third World Studies at the University of California, San Diego.* The professor's message is optimistic: mankind is facing a new Dark Age, but it is one which holds great promise of creative new values and new institutions of greater freedom, of real participation in public and private affairs. His is a vision of humankind at last realizing its humanity, at last sloughing off the false values of Western society with its intolerable waste and its ideology of endless consumption. And where does our author see the "grass sprouting through the concrete," the forces of regeneration? Although the Israeli kibbutzim get a kind word, and Sweden is praised as a country in which the "new person" envisaged by Lewis Mumford is more than a rhetorical phrase, the main answer is the Third World: China, Viet-

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* *The Promise of the Coming Dark Age*, W. H. Freeman, 211 pp., $4.95.

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nam, Tanzania, Yugoslavia, Guinea-Bissau, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia, Egypt (under Nasser), Cuba, and Peru.

Let us look at this list. Ethiopia and Somalia are ruled by gangs of military despots who indiscriminately kill their political opponents as well as each other; they are also bankrupt, and without outside help would be altogether lost. Ethiopia, furthermore, may disintegrate from its unresolved minority problems. As for Mozambique, which Stavrianos says may have an impact on Africa comparable to that of Vietnam on Southeast Asia —he quotes President Machel giving top priority not to administrative or economic measures but to "transforming the individual thinking"—the unfortunate history of FRELIMO, the Mozambique "liberation" movement, shows that it spent as much effort in internecine killing as in fighting the Portuguese, and the transformation of individual thinking in that country means no more than a giant purge. The prisons of Mozambique are overflowing with inmates, whose numbers far exceed those under Portuguese rule. The economy of the country is a shambles, according to its own leaders, who have turned to the United Nations with an urgent appeal for massive help—hardly a shining example of self-reliance.

Stavrianos seems equally ill-informed about Egypt under Nasser and about Cambodia. He claims, for instance, that a counterrevolutionary Western strategy "lavished" aid on King Hussein of Jordan but not on Nasser's Egypt. In fact, Egypt received infinitely more money and goods from the West (not to mention Soviet billions) than Jordan; without U.S.-donated grain, Egypt would have starved. About Cambodia, a reviewer in the New York *Times* claims that Stavrianos "makes mincemeat" of standard Western perceptions of events there. A closer reading shows that his only source is a single favorable report on postwar Cambodia, one which is contradicted by a hundred unfavorable ones—a new and original recipe for making mincemeat.

This leaves Tanzania and Guinea-Bissau. In the former, President Nyerere's rule has been enlightened, for Africa; he was elected with a majority of only 93 per cent and the number of political enemies executed from time to time is smaller than elsewhere. Fifteen years ago much promise was attached to the communal *ujamaa* villages, but they have not been a success; Tanzania's growth rate from 1960 to 1973 was 2.8 per cent, less than its population increase, and since then the country, hit by drought and rising oil prices, has depended on aid from abroad. Guinea-Bissau, finally, is a very small country of some 600,000 inhabitants, whose leader in the struggle against Portuguese colonialism was Amilcar Cabral, a Communist and an impressive figure by any standard. But Cabral was killed, and while his successors seem to be continuing his pragmatic policies, it is far too early to conclude that they will be able to cope with the country's problems—let alone provide inspiration to others; they too have become more and more dependent on help from abroad. Stavrianos has a great many bitter things to say about the counterrevolutionary strategy of the West in the Third World, but what he does not say is that a decisive part of the aid now given to the self-styled "Marxist regimes" of Ethiopia and Somalia, and to Tanzania and Mozambique, originates in the United States and Western Europe. Without it, they would all probably collapse.

The Yugoslav experiment in workers' self-management has attracted much interest in the West, and Stavrianos expresses great admiration for it. But the results are in doubt, to put it cautiously. According to recent Yugoslav studies, most decision-making is done by the top management. Moreover, Milovan Djilas, who was one of the chief proponents of workers' control, has said in a recent interview that it has not resolved any important problems but simply expanded the new ruling class to embrace some worker-leaders. This is borne out by Yugoslavia's general political development: where it once seemed that the country might evolve toward a greater degree of freedom, there is now actually greater repression in every field. This in turn raises the question of whether the failure of workers' self-management was not inevitable, for industrial democracy and totalitarian rule cannot coexist.

THUS, after many detours, we are left with China. To Stavrianos, "boss, bureaucrat, and expert have been demystified" in China. There, since those at the top must spend part of their time working at the bottom, the leaders learn from the masses, and "no policy decision remains fixed once it is made. There is constant testing of its reception and effectiveness among the people, reformulation, retesting, reappraisal, revoking, and so on." Although Stavrianos is not certain that Maoism can survive Mao, nevertheless Mao's China represents for him the human model *par excellence*, hardworking, dedicated, self-sacrificing, flexible, inventive, disciplined, honest, puritanical, well-motivated, cooperative, respectful of the virtues and dignity of labor. Above all, whereas in other Third World countries Western counterrevolutionary influence has simply perpetuated the rule of elites, in China (and in Indochina) power has passed into the hands of the masses, "the first anti-meritocratic revolution in human history."

What is one to say about this? Whatever the achievements of China since 1948, the belief that it is not ruled by an elite, that the "masses" have any influence on the shaping of the country's policy, that participatory democracy actually exists there, leads beyond the confines of rational discussion. China is certainly not an enormous economic success. Agricultural production during the last twenty years has averaged a 2 per-cent increase an-

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nually (despite growing investments), and has thus barely kept pace with population growth. (In 1976 it may have been actually less than 2 per cent.) Worse yet, from a doctrinal point of view, the production of the communes seems to be considerably lower than that of private plots. Greater investments will have to be made in the future in the development of industry, but then again, industrial workers are demanding higher wages. If Mao was incapable of persuading them that idealism and public service are more important than material rewards, his successors surely will be unable to do so.

It is perfectly true that the Chinese leaders are hardworking and have always put great emphasis on the unity of theory and practice (very much in contrast to the self-styled African or Latin American Marxists who combine revolutionary phraseology with a predilection for material comforts and a profound contempt for manual labor). But all the same, they constitute an elite which has never practiced participatory democracy as far as important policy decisions are concerned. Neither Mao nor his wife, neither Chou nor any other leader of the party, the army, or the political police ever went to work in a commune or factory, and rotation in the leadership has only come about as the result of purges in the struggle for power.

It is one thing to argue that China may eventually overcome its present difficulties. But to regard a society of unprecedented regimentation, control, and indoctrination as the new Arcadia, a solution to the spiritual and material needs of mankind, is a perversion of breathtaking enormity, more a symptom of than an answer to Western "degeneracy."

Quite apart from the fallacies about the actual situation in the Third World and China, there are two fundamental issues with which writers of the Stavrianos stripe usually fail to come to terms. One is the problem of mass participation, which they make a fetish of in their writings. It is perfectly true that all modern political regimes have to mobilize the "masses" in one way or another, but the imperative holds equally for fascism and Communism, and even for the more streamlined military dictatorships. Historical experience has shown that such mobilization means little more than manipulation, and has nothing to do with the wished-for emergence of *homo humanus*. The replacement of old-fashioned autocratic regimes by more effective, more ruthless, and more repressive ones is not the road to progress. Iraq, which Stavrianos mentions, is a fairly typical example. "The displaced peasants [in Baghdad] took to the streets during the revolution of July 1958, exterminated the Hashemite royal family, and established a republic," Stavrianos writes. In fact the Hashemite royal family was killed not by the masses but by a group of military conspirators; a few years later their leader suffered a similar fate. Iraq has been a dictatorship ever since, more effective and more brutal; whether a regime of this kind is defined as a monarchy or a "republic" is of little more than semantic interest.

The second issue is the emphasis placed on self-help and self-reliance, on communal life and small-scale politics. This is a modern form of an ancient idea—the idea of Natural Man—and in the last century alone it has produced whole libraries of mechanophobe fantasies, from Butler's *Erewhon* (where the machines are collected and deposited in museums), to Chesterton's *Napoleon of Notting Hill* and E.M. Forster's *The Machine Stops*. It has in fact more frequently inspired the extreme Right than the Left. Alienated man in the big cities, the corrupting effects of cultural modernism, the need to return to "origins," the idea of basing the economy on self-help, on "joy in service"—all these notions occur in the speeches and writings of Hitler and Alfred Rosenberg, of Richard-Walther Darré and other ideologists of German National Socialism. Early Nazi sects developed elaborate blueprints for communal settlements (a "new brotherhood of man") complete with nudism, homage to the sun, and bicycles instead of cars. This is not to say that because these ideas occurred to the Nazis they have to be rejected out of hand. Like the mobilization of the masses, they are in themselves neither good nor bad; everything depends on what use is made of them. Still, it is useful to bear in mind Marx's contempt, in the *Communist Manifesto,* for "the promoters of duodecimo editions of the New Jerusalem," especially when such promoters are describing not some future hoped-for condition but already existing societies.

II

Fantasies about the Third World vary greatly in character; whereas some concentrate on the alleged arcadian purity of primitive society, others, to the contrary, emphasize the growing economic and political power of the Third World and the threat this poses to the industrialized West. According to this latter school of thought, the great majority of mankind is in rebellion against political and economic exploitation, and unless the West changes its attitude toward these new and tremendously strong forces it will be doomed. The arguments that have been invoked range from considerations of economic self-interest (Third World countries hold most of the world's needed raw materials), to those of morality (retribution for past injustices), to those of military expedience (desperate nations will use nuclear blackmail unless there is a just distribution of goods). Hence the call for a new economic world order, for cartelization, for indexation (figuring-in the prices of commodities exported by underdeveloped countries against the goods they have to import), and for the cancellation of Third World

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debts, as well as the demand for free transfer of technology and gifts or grants.

The enormity of the economic problems facing the poor nations cannot be disputed by any sane person, and there is much to be said for their attempt to get higher prices for their products and easier access to Western markets. The unfortunate truth is, however, that the bulk of commodity trading in the world (except for oil) takes place not between poor countries and rich countries but among the industrial nations themselves. If, for argument's sake, all raw materials were to rise in price by 10 or 20 per cent, some industrial countries, such as Japan and West Germany, would be put at a disadvantage, but others (the United States, Canada) would benefit; among 87 developing countries, 12 would gain substantially, 16 would lose, and 59 would reap only marginal benefits. Moreover, many raw materials can be replaced. If the price of cotton rose beyond a certain level, artificial fibers could be used. Coffee and cocoa, if too highly priced, would no longer remain part of our staple diet. The consumption of tin could be reduced by two-thirds with the use of new technologies; copper (to provide another example) could be recycled. Cartelization might, it is true, have a salutary effect inasmuch as it would compel the industrial countries to save raw materials that are finite and that have been wasted in the past. But even in the unlikely event that unilateral cartelization were successful, only a few of the poorer countries would benefit; those most in need would not be among them. Again, a good case can be made for the cancellation of Third World debts, but here too, with the exception of India and Pakistan, the very poorest nations would not benefit very much because they received few loans in the first place; South Korea is about as much in debt as the whole of tropical Africa, and the debts of the Communist bloc are many times higher still.

One of the arguments most frequently used in favor of a massive North-South aid effort is the politically "explosive" character of Third World poverty—the assumption being that rapid economic development will somehow defuse the explosion. But experience shows that inequality of incomes markedly *increases* with economic development, at least in the short run, and that growth would result in more turbulence rather than less. The "rebellion of the poor" now taking place is a political campaign by the top stratum of the middle-income countries, who in both relative and absolute terms are better off than the majority of the population in the industrial world which is supposed to pay for their demands.

The military argument is perhaps the most curious of all, for on the one hand it is too far-fetched, and on the other hand it does not go far enough. If we assume that a desperate Ruritania would use nuclear blackmail against the United States, why should blackmail stop at a one-time transfer of resources? The demand could well be made that the citizens of the United States should in the future share their income on a *permanent* basis with the Ruritanians.

In short, there is no sound reason to believe that the "explosive" economic situation of the poorer countries will in any way diminish significantly on account of efforts made by the industrialized countries. The economic problems of most Third World countries are by no means insoluble, but the decisive effort will have to come from themselves. If on every occasion they invoke national sovereignty but deny this principle to others; if they continue to believe that population growth is not a critical problem; if their development efforts continue to be concentrated more and more on industry and less on agriculture, the results will be predictable, regardless of whether the industrialized nations commit 0.7 per cent of their GNP to the poorer nations (as the United Nations has demanded), or 7 per cent, or more.

ECONOMIC issues aside, the alleged growing political importance of the Third World is also something of an optical illusion. At the recent meeting of the European Communist parties, President Tito of Yugoslavia declared that the movement of nonalignment has developed into a "powerful international factor, which independently defines its policies and positions." It is easy to understand why Yugoslavia should propagate such views; facing Soviet pressure, it is vitally interested in some kind of collective security system, however spurious. And certainly, as far as numbers go, the group of the "nonaligned" has grown by leaps and bounds since the days of Bandung (1955) and Belgrade (1961), when 25 countries attended their conferences. At the third conference of heads of state in Lusaka in 1970 there were 51 in attendance, in Algiers in 1973 there was 75 full members and 14 liberation movements, and in Colombo last August the number of full members had risen to 84. (On the other hand, the number of attending heads of state or government fell from about 70 at the preceding summit to 41 at Colombo.)

Yet even a cursory look at the composition of the membership shows precious little in common. For one thing, the list of conflicts among these countries is considerably longer than the list of member states. Syria, which is a member, fights the PLO, which is also a member; and within a year or two Algeria and Morocco, Libya and Egypt, India and Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Somalia (to give but a few examples) could be in a state of war. This by itself casts a large measure of doubt on the efficacy of such proposals as the one advocated by the Yugoslavs for collective security. Nor is there any logic to the criteria for membership. Vietnam and North Korea are prominent members of the nonaligned camp, but China has not been admitted and Rumania was not even given

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observer status at Colombo for fear of offending the Russians. Cuba is a leading member, but so is Argentina; and so on.

Ideologically, the nonaligned movement once had anti-colonialism as a common denominator, but since virtually all the countries once under colonial domination have meanwhile attained independence, this is no longer a live issue. Member states all subscribe to the principle that economic relations should be based on equality and justice —this is the "New Economic Order" as advocated by the "Group of 77"—but the "77" include on the one hand OPEC countries with the highest per-capita income in the world, and on the other hand the very poorest of nations. A new, all-embracing objective needs to be found to provide even a semblance of unity; this, however, seems impossible, as political, social, and economic interests diverge all along the line.

Apart from differences in political orientation and social systems, the nonaligned camp consists to all intents and purposes of four groups: the OPEC countries; the middle-income nations whose exports are of economic importance or which are at a relatively advanced stage of economic development; the very poor (the majority); and lastly those which do not fit into any of these categories. Attempts are constantly made to ignore the conflicting interests, but the widening discrepancy between declarations and realities is a source of growing tension. To give but one illustration: not so long ago it was predicted that the OPEC governments would provide support to the poorer countries, far in excess (on a per-capita basis) of that given by industrial nations. The interim balance, after three years, shows that while the OPEC countries have made promises of many billions of dollars, the amount actually paid has been a mere fraction of that. Most of it, moreover, has gone to Arab and Muslim nations and a small amount, for political reasons, to India. The poor African and Asian countries have not even been reimbursed for the foreign-exchange losses created by the oil-price increases. Nor have the poorer Arab and Muslim countries much to be thankful for. Pakistan has received little, and Egypt, with its pressing needs for economic development, has not fared much better. President Sadat's attempts to solicit help from Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf states have resulted in promises to underwrite Egyptian arms purchases but only negligible sums for economic-development projects. These facts of life have already had a sobering effect, and may be only the beginning of a general process of disillusionment.

What binds the nonaligned together is a lot of high-sounding rhetoric and the ambition of a few leaders manipulating the rest. President Echeverria of Mexico, who wanted to be UN General Secretary, became a great advocate of Third World solidarity; likewise Mrs. Gandhi, who uses the "bloc" to enhance India's bargaining position. As for the rhetoric, it is taken seriously in the West, which is a big mistake. Thus, at the Colombo conference France was threatened with an oil embargo on account of its trade with South Africa. A typical example of the demagoguery so frequent at these meetings was the speech of the Algerian minister of trade at the Nairobi conference in which he declared that Western aid had been totally unhelpful—which did not prevent him from asking for more of it.

There is yet another common denominator, the absence of political freedom. Most of the leaders convening in Algiers, Colombo, and Havana are usurpers or were voted in by 99.9 per cent of the electorate in phony elections. In no more than a handful of these countries do elementary political rights exist: a few Caribbean islands (such as Barbados, Trinidad, Tobago, and Jamaica) and places like Malta, Mauritius, the Maldives, the Seychelles, Cyprus, Malaysia, and perhaps one or two others. The total population of these free (or semi-free) countries is less than twenty million, about 2 per cent of the total population of the nonaligned bloc. All the others are under one-party rule or dictatorships of one form or another, some of them savage, others more enlightened.

Wherever democratic institutions once existed in the Third World, they have broken down. The trend in the nonaligned camp is toward the suppression of human rights, most recently the last vestiges of freedom of the press. The process, which started a long time ago, is reflected, *inter alia,* in the shrinking number of newspapers. In the early 1960's there were still some 240 newspapers in Africa, today there are a mere hundred; there has been a similar fall-off in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The planned coordination of the media throughout the nonaligned countries should liquidate the last remnants of independence. If, as is quite possible, systematic censorship is introduced and foreign journalists are excluded, there will no longer be any reports on the murderous policies of Idi Amin and President Bokassa (of the Central African Republic), nor will there be news about the systematic use of torture in Cameroon, Mali, Senegal, Lesotho, Guinea, Zaire, India, Gabon, Mauretania, and many other countries, nor about the extermination of minorities in Cameron, Ethiopia, Malawi, Iraq, Sudan, Chad, and Rwanda.

Murder and torture are crimes whether they are committed by whites or by non-whites, and racism cannot be justified even if it appears among black people or yellow. As the years pass, the argument that all the shortcomings of the Third World are the result of past colonial oppression and present Western exploitation has turned into an alibi for the failure of the new elites. But this alibi will not wash. No matter what the Western nations can and should do to provide economic aid, they

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cannot bring about the cultural and moral revolution which is the essential prerequisite for real change. The West can export food and modern technology, but it cannot supply new and better elites; these will have to emerge from within the developing nations themselves. The excesses of some Third World regimes are defended with the argument that these are educational dictatorships in a transitional period on the path to democracy. In fact, many of them are not educational but regressive dictatorships, whose "radical" or "socialist" declarations are a smokescreen for the leadership's desire to stay in power and enjoy the spoils thereof. In such countries political morality is low or nonexistent, and the government's ritual appeals for hard work, honesty, and austerity go unheeded because they emanate from leaders whose style of living exemplifies the opposite qualities. This is of course not true of all Third World elites—in this regard especially one cannot refuse one's respect for the Chinese—but it is true of too many of them.

Some years ago, analyzing the political prospects of the Third World in these pages ("Imperialism in this Century," May 1970), the late George Lichtheim ridiculed the fashionable dichotomy that places Western imperialism against the starving masses of the Third World. In this perspective nationalism is identified with socialism which, in turn, is a synonym for anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism. Lichtheim stressed that in principle Third World nationalism could turn "Right" as well as "Left," and that in either case there would be a revolution from above, with the intelligentsia establishing a dictatorship and turning into a bureaucracy responsible only to itself. Lichtheim thought that the Maoist model was more likely to be imitated than the facist model, which had gone out of fashion.

Lichtheim's analysis of the dilemmas facing the Third World is still valid, although the perspective has changed since he wrote. The fragmentation of the Third World has progressed much more quickly than could have been expected even seven years ago. Some Third World countries have grown rich owing to sudden windfalls, others have fallen even further behind, and the Chinese are not in a position to claim leadership. Above all, the question has arisen of whether the Maoist model is indeed applicable to other parts of the world, for it presupposes the existence of a determined, efficient, and truly selfless vanguard. In most countries such a vanguard simply does not exist, or where it exists is not strong enough, or where strong enough it lacks the qualities for becoming an agent of modernization. Is it possible that, broadly speaking, China constitutes a historical exception to the rule? (And in the light of recent events there, can one be sure that even China is an exception?) If so, the future prospects for Third World countries which lack both resources and a "vanguard" are stagnation, regression, and a more or less permanent condition of turbulence.

IN THE final analysis the problem is political, not economic. Some Third World countries are so backward and desperately poor that they will have to depend for a long time on outside assistance. But for many the economic prospects are less gloomy; given the right approach, the problem of food production is a soluble one, and with the upturn in world trade and rising prices for nonferous metals and agricultural commodities, economic growth should continue. Much can be done by Western nations in this respect; Western aid, which has fallen in real terms by 3 per cent over the last decade, could be increased, and new agreements could be concluded to offset the deterioriation in the terms of trade.

But before this happens, the air will have to be cleared and a fundamental reorientation in Western policies will have to take place. The United States and other Western nations, far from alleviating the international situation, have helped to aggravate it through their willingness to negotiate with a more or less artificial conglomeration of countries instead of dealing with individual nations on a bilateral basis in accordance with their needs. The motives underlying this gross error of political judgment may have been laudable—there was the wish to help the most seriously affected countries and at the same time to "de-politicize" aid, and there was the desire, again quite justified, to negotiate the terms of trade with the producers of raw materials. But this last cannot be achieved in an overall deal; it has to be done with each group of producers. Furthermore, multilateral aid, far from improving the relationship between donor and recipient, has done just the opposite. Negotiations between blocs of countries inevitably tend to ignore the interests of the truly needy. Stridently anti-Western governments, which spend far more of their considerable oil revenues on armed intervention and international terrorism than on helping their less fortunate neighbors, appear as the representatives of the "forgotten 40 per cent." Anxious to prevent a confrontation with the Third World, the West has maneuvered itself into a position in which confrontation has become inescapable and the United States has been made to accept the historical responsibility for the effects of colonialism.

Sailing under the banner of international equity and a global compact, the Western governments are in fact on a collision course. Nothing constructive will be accomplished until that course is changed. Above all, no advance can be made so long as the West does not muster the courage to stop talking to demagogues with no genuine interest in economic and social improvement, for whom the nonaligned conferences, UNCTAD, the Paris "North-South Dialogue," and the Group of 77 and other such bodies are merely a platform for their own destructive political ends.

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Poet of Exile

Robert Alter

Impossible to communicate anything but particulars—historical and contemporary things, human beings as things, their instrumentalities of capillaries and veins binding up and bound up with events and contingencies.
—Louis Zukofsky, "An Objective" (1930).

WHEN Charles Reznikoff died in January 1976, at the age of eighty-one, he had only recently begun to be generally recognized as an important American poet of the mid-century decades. Until the New Directions selection of his poems in 1962, *By the Waters of Manhattan*, all of the dozen volumes of verse he had up to then produced had been published privately—some actually set in type by the poet himself—or by the small Objectivist Press, "an organization of writers," as its jacket blurb, written by Reznikoff, announced, "who are publishing their own work and that of other writers whose work ought to be read." After the focus of activity in the Objectivist group (to which we shall return) during the 30's, Reznikoff receded as a visible presence in American poetry, and I would suppose that for the next two decades he figured in most readers' minds, if at all, as a culturally pious Jewish genre poet, his verse on topics of Jewish history and on biblical or rabbinic motifs appearing in periodicals like the *Menorah Journal*, the *Jewish Frontier* (which he edited from 1955), *Midstream*, and COMMENTARY.

The New Directions selection in 1962 seems to have signaled the re-emergence into the light of critical esteem not only of Reznikoff but of the other Objectivists as well. When, for example, *Contemporary Literature*, between 1967 and 1970, conducted a series of eight interviews with American poets of stature, half of them turned out to be Objectivists, including, of course, Reznikoff. In a recent issue of the *Times Literary Supplement* (October 1, 1976), the poet, Anne Stevenson, actually described Reznikoff as "one of the finest writers of his generation," on a par with and in certain respects even superior to William Carlos Williams. The first volume of an edition of his complete poetry, handsomely printed and edited with scrupulous care and tact by Seamus Cooney, was published in the year of the poet's death,* so Reznikoff's long inaccessible work is at last available in an attractive and readable format.

The literary enterprise of Charles Reznikoff is an instructive test-case for the whole phenomenon of American Jewish writing because no one has gone farther than he in the explicit effort to be both a conscious Jewish writer and an emphatically American one. His parents were immigrants from Russia who worked in the garment industry; he grew up in Brooklyn and more briefly on the East Side with the usual passive knowledge of Yiddish and no instruction in Hebrew—he would first acquire the elements of that language only when he was in his thirties. After completing a law degree, he began working at a series of odd jobs, for a while in business, then, steadily, in literature, as a researcher, editor, translator, freelance writer. He moved through the Greenwich Village literary bohemia of the 20's, sat, sometimes sympathetically, on the sidelines of the radicalism of the 30's, but was also a member of the *Menorah Journal* circle in its heyday during these years, was preoccupied with Jewish themes—at first chiefly in his verse plays rather than in his poems—from his early twenties, and finally was bound to Jewish institutional life through his Labor Zionist commitments, his marriage to the Zionist writer Marie Syrkin, his undertaking of projects of historical research and historical fiction for the Jewish Publication Society, his acute concern for the collective fate of the Jews after 1933.

Apart from a sojourn in Hollywood at the beginning of the 40's, Reznikoff remained a lifelong New Yorker, and New York, the Jews, and America are the three matrices of his poetry, both early and late. When he identified his writing in a note for a 1970 London anthology, *Contemporary Poets*, these are the terms he chose: " 'Objectivist,' images clear but the meaning not stated but suggested by the objective details and the music of the verse; words pithy and plain; without the artifice of regular meters; themes, chiefly Jewish, American, urban." The relationship among these three chief themes deserves some reflection, and, still more crucial for an assessment of Reznikoff is the question of how the Objectivist method, here

* *Poems 1918-1936*, edited by Seamus Cooney, Black Sparrow Press, paperback, 222 pp., $4.00. A second volume is scheduled for publication soon.

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succinctly described, lends itself to an imaginative engagement in these three realms of experience.

THE Objectivists, as wavering and elusive as their collective character may have been, were the closest thing to a modernist movement in poetry that America produced—especially if one considers that the other obvious candidate, Imagism, was, after all, an Anglo-American, partly trans-Atlantic, phenomenon. Pound and the Imagists were the chief inspiration of the Objectivists, but in contrast to the Imagist world of visual surfaces, "the mind," as William Carlos Williams later put it, "rather than the unsupported eye entered the picture."* The five poets most frequently identified with the group are Louis Zukofsky, George Oppen, Carl Rakosi, Reznikoff, and William Carlos Williams. All but Williams were Jews, and all but Williams and Reznikoff were Communists, but neither Marxism nor Jewishness had any impress on their aesthetic ideology. Zukofsky seems to have been the organizer and promoter, and behind him, Pound, from abroad, the tutelary spirit. It was Pound who persuaded Harriet Monroe to devote a special issue of *Poetry* in 1931 to the Objectivists, with Zukofsky as guest-editor, and three years later Pound was listed, with Williams and Zukofsky, on the Advisory Board of the newly launched Objectivist Press. (There is, of course, an irony in Pound's involvement with all these offshoots of the Jewish immigrant milieu, but it would appear that Pound was, in diametric contrast to Eliot, an ideological anti-Semite but not a social one. In 1948, Zukofsky vehemently defended him, claiming that Pound had never exhibited the slightest personal anti-Jewish sentiments, and that his ideological aberrations would in time prove to be only an odd footnote to his great contribution to poetry.)

The term "Objectivist" was apparently invented by Zukofsky, without consultation with the others, for the purposes of the special issue of *Poetry*, borrowing from the Sixth Movement (1930) of his lifelong, *Canto*-like poem, *"A"*: "An objective—rays of the object brought to a focus,/An objective—nature as creator—desire for what is objectively perfect." The meanings rippling out from the word were abundant enough for everyone to find something on which to float his own poetic aspirations. In addition to the two notions suggested in these lines, of the poem as a polished focusing lens and the poem as a rigorous reenactment of the objective world, there is at least one further meaning attached to the term by the poets, the idea of the poem as a constructed thing: "[Objectivism] recognizes the poem, apart from its meaning, to be an object to be dealt with as such" (Williams). Zukofsky did not help to clarify matters much in the manifesto he appended to the February 1931 issue of *Poetry*, compounded as it was of ellipses, private references, and other strategies of aggressive bewilderment. ("I confess," Reznikoff said in his 1968 interview, "that I could not follow all that Zukofsky had to say about 'objectification,' or, for that matter, 'sincerity'"—though it was Reznikoff's poetry that served as the principal exhibit of the Zukofsky essay!) These arts of bewilderment are precisely the recurrent characteristics of Zukofsky's heavily allusive, syntactically sliding, punning, self-reflexive poetry, so that for a clear practical demonstration of the Objectivist program, one must look elsewhere—most particularly, I think, to the shorter poems of Reznikoff and Williams.

A few illustrations will be helpful. Here is one poem from a group of seven called "After Rain," which appears in *Jerusalem the Golden* (1934), in many ways Reznikoff's strongest single volume:

The morning light
is dim and blue—
the silent light
of woods;
but now begins
the slight yet multitudinous
noise of rain.

The debt to Imagism is clear in the careful visual definition of the poem and in its compact, beautifully crafted simplicity. The Objectivist reach beyond Imagist limits is marked by the strategic little explosion of "multitudinous"—a word that in its polysyllabic Latinity breaks the sequence of iambic music, tumbles the discourse from sight into sound with a nice onomatopoeic effect, and, above all, by the slight surprise of its application as a modifier of "noise," intimates a configuration of the perceiving mind, perhaps an incipient personification, in what might otherwise seem a pure representation of sensory experience.

OCCASIONALLY, Reznikoff's short poems do seem entirely Imagist, haiku-like pieces of two or three lines that achieve painterly effects, stress primary colors, showing a fondness for fog scenes and moments of transition from sun to rain or rain to sun. More typically, however, the presence of the reflective observer is felt in the details chosen and in the way they are rendered, and is sometimes made explicit with a first-person pronoun. The process in which personal revelation quietly unfolds from scenic details is particularly evident in the last four lines of the following poem, also from *Jerusalem the Golden*:

The river is like a lake this morning
for quiet—image of houses and green bank.

A barge is lying at a dock;
nothing moves but the crane
emptying the cargo.

* Williams's article, "Objectivism," in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger, 1965.

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The dark green hill,
the sunset, staining the river—
quiet as a lake;
the tree beside me
covered with white blossoms
that cover but cannot hide
the black gnarled branches.

One is reminded here, as in so many of Reznikoff's poems, of William Carlos Williams's evocations of a *paysage moralisé* from the finely attentive rendering of visual detail. (In many of the instances where there are close parallels, the Reznikoff poem is the earlier one, but in any case there is little evidence that one poet actually influenced the other.) Let me cite just one analogous poem by Williams to illustrate the affinities between the two. A brief piece from the group, "The Descent of Winter," it also focuses on branches in seasonal transition, defined by a special quality of atmosphere, in order to intimate a personal apprehension of existence:

in this strong light
the leafless beechtree
shines like a cloud

it seems to glow
of itself
with a soft stript light
of love
over the brittle
grass

But there are
on second look
a few yellow leaves
still shaking

just one here one there
trembling vividly

Reznikoff, I suspect, would have chosen to write the second stanza without the line, "of love," preferring more frequently than Williams to convey such attitudes not by naming them but through the rendering of objective details—like those three consecutive stresses which communicate the ugly insistent presence of "black gnarled branches" beneath the white blossoms. In any case, the similarity in general poetic strategy is apparent, a similarity that extends (though not in this particular poem by Williams) to the creation of a wholly unironic urban pastoral mode. In this Reznikoff poem, the crane and barge are perfectly harmonized with the quiet river and green hill. Elsewhere, shining pavements, motor cars, even sewers emptying into glistening rivers and rats creeping through heaps of cans, are integrated with white gulls floating on blue water, the gloom of woods, and other idyllic elements deployed in painterly compositions. In some of these pastoral pieces, the poet taking spiritual stock of his experience enters into the foreground of the perceived scene, but even in these cases the subtle power of delicate intimation is not lost. Here, for example, is a five-line poem from *Inscriptions: 1944-1956* (1959):

Put it down in your ledger
among the profits of this day:
the dark uncertain path of the wind
on the bright water;
snow on the yellow branches of the sycamore.

The last three lines alone might be an Imagist poem. It is the ruminative presence in the first two lines that makes the whole an Objectivist piece in a characteristic Reznikoff inflection.

These scrupulously fashioned short poems in the Objectivist manner reveal Reznikoff in the fullest command of his art. The more striking of them—and there are many which could be called that—seem to me quite as fine as anything of the sort that Williams wrote. To these one must add his brief narrative vignettes, mostly of urban and proletarian lives, in which the Objectivist procedures of restraint, seeming impassivity, and precise specification are transferred from nature to the sphere of human actions, with a resultant flatness at times, but also at times with stark effectiveness.

BUT IF these various Objectivist poems mark the height of Reznikoff's achievement, what of his persistent effort to be a Jewish poet? Here some observations are in order about the relation of Objectivist poetry to time, and on Reznikoff's own involvement with the idea of the past. The characteristically Objectivist poem is tightly locked into the moment of experience that it enacts—almost to the same extent as the painted canvases it frequently invokes lexically and by analogies of composition. The Objectivist concentration on the present moment is of course not an isolated instance in the poetry of our century. We should hardly be surprised that some of the most representative projects of modernist verse reflect a breakdown of tradition and the loss of a sense of collective experience, or that the return to tradition after the Imagist experiment of poets like Pound, Eliot, and Zukofsky should often prove to be a self-conscious scissors-and-paste operation of learned citation and pastiche rather than an organic continuation of the tradition. Most of Reznikoff's Objectivist poems are suffused with presentness, and at times he takes positive comfort in that fact, as in this piece from "Autobiography: Hollywood" (in *Going To and Fro Walking Up and Down*, 1941):

I like this secret walking
in the fog;
unseen, unheard,
among the bushes
thick with drops;
the solid path invisible
a rod away—

and only the narrow present is alive.

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More than a decade later, in *Inscriptions*, he provides a gloss on this idea in a four-line aphorism which suggests that the only certain identity, the only ontological security he can hope to enjoy, is in the present time and place, the blessed realm of the known and the determinate:

> The dogs that walk with me are Now and Here
> and a third dog I do not trust at all,
> for he would lead me far into the past
> and there I'd lose myself: his name is If.

Reznikoff's imagination operated on the present moment—which like other modern writers he often felt as a kind of haven in the flux of time—with exquisite poise. What is remarkable is that he nevertheless was preoccupied with the past, felt driven as a Jew to make raid after raid upon it along varying avenues of attack—without, however, any imposing success in conquering it for his imaginative purposes. The same volume in which "I like this secret walking" appears, begins with a sequence of poems entitled "A Short History of Israel: Notes and Glosses." The first long segment of this sequence evinces many of the characteristic faults of Reznikoff's self-consciously Jewish writing. In this historical panorama, Objectivist restraint gives way to "epic" catalogues in which damask, furs, and spice, olive trees, fig trees, and vineyards, figure with a heavy abundance and obviousness. Though such materials are deployed with a craftsman's sense of dramatic appropriateness, there is something inert about the poem as a whole. The chief problem is that this is not the past imaginatively recovered but a series of frozen formulas traditionally associated with the past, the past abstracted into its most familiar literary mediations. And the conception of the Jews themselves is distinctly apologetic—this was, we should keep in mind, 1941—expressed in the anaphoric oratorical rhetoric that apologetics invites: "Among men who gorge and swill/ and sleep in their vomit,/ be temperate and clean; among men who lust and whore/ be true;/ among men in armor/ be men of peace;/ . . . among men who torture/ be Jews."

On occasion, Reznikoff exhibits an acute consciousness of having embarked on a radically contradictory enterprise: to "objectify" in poetry the impelling spirit of a body of historical experience from which he himself, standing on the other side of the chasm of modernity, is alienated. In the concluding poem of "A Short History of Israel," he muses over the very different sense of existence from his own that his grandfathers possessed, living out each act of their lives within a finely-meshed frame of law, in the sight of God: "their past was still the present and the present/ a dread future's./ But I am private as an animal." What introduces a split in Reznikoff's work between a personal poetry of perfect authenticity and a public voice that does not always carry conviction is his repeated uneasiness with being "private as an animal." The need to break out of that privacy into a large historical realm of collective experience moved him to anomalous poetic strategies, at times seemed to encourage the expression of a second self cruder in sensibility, less resistant to the temptations of the obvious gesture.

The end of the poem just cited offers a minor but symptomatic instance of this mechanism. After defining his own private, present-bound condition over against his ancestors' existence as part of a historical continuum, the speaker goes on to resolve, "I will fast for you, Judah,/ and be silent for you/ and wake in the night for you. . . ." I am not, of course, questioning the sincerity of the resolution: it is an understandable and indeed admirable resolution for any Jewish writer to be making in that first year of mass killings as the *Einsatzgruppen* swept eastward. The problem is rather with the imaginative realization of the resolution, which is no more than a rehearsal of ritual gestures, literal and stylistic, a piece of willed piety, the intervention of a kind of poetic superego rather than the expression of an integrated poetic self.

As EARLY as 1921, Reznikoff was engaged with the passion of an autodidact in discovering the Jewish past, and the American past as well, and, with true autodidact intentness, was already trying to make a reckoning with the past, invoking its testimony—a favorite title-word for him—in his writing. His verse plays (collected in *Nine Plays*, 1927) are all based on historical themes, and their subjects constitute a ranging survey of the possibilities of Jewish history and, more fragmentarily, of American history, with dramatic studies of Abraham, Herod, Rashi, Uriel Acosta, Lewis and Clark, Nat Turner, John Brown.

The dramatic genre was clearly not congenial to Reznikoff. These plays, which are sequences of short scenes with little dramatic tension, are not really workable as theater, and the vaguely heightened, unprepossessing verse in which they are cast does not make them viable as poems. The young Reznikoff, already a highly accomplished poet in his pieces based on personal perception, was artistically thwarted by the historical subjects he sought so ardently to embrace. At its worst, as in the play, "Genesis," this poetry is little more than a versified rewording of the sources or a regrettable embellishment of them. When, for example, the annunciating angel tells the childless Abram, "Your spark/ Will light a fire that shall burn/ Through every nation,/ And its sparks shall be seeds of fire," the weight and dignity of the actual biblical promise are dissipated by this translation into conventional Romantic imagery, and the verse itself, as elsewhere in Reznikoff's treatment of historical topics, swells to the pomp and ceremony of the text for a cantata. If the Objectivist

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poet, in Hugh Kenner's fine phrase, "is the geometer of minima," it was Reznikoff's quandary that he was also impelled as a Jewish poet to be a chronometer of millennia, and for that difficult role he struggled to find an appropriate poetic idiom.

The complementary opposite of this effort to work up an exalted poetic vision of the past was a technique of textually incorporating the past with the most limited intervention of the poet. Beginning in the 20's, Reznikoff repeatedly experimented with assembling collages from the sources, using mainly the Authorized Version of the Bible and, occasionally, the available English translations of the Mishnah and Talmud. It is technically interesting to see how he constructs a readable narrative poem by stringing together a careful selection of biblical verses, only occasionally modified, and laid out on the page as free verse, but his retelling in this fashion of Genesis and Exodus, the David story, the life and prophecies of Jeremiah, is less an imaginative achievement than the affirmation of a need to lay claim to the past, to take possession of it in his writing through the simple act of rehearsing it as English verse. His two collages of rabbinic texts, "Palestine Under the Romans" (1936) and the longer "Jews in Babylonia" (1969), are more like original poems because, instead of being anthologies of verses reproducing a familiar story-line, they are collocations of disparate legal and legendary phrases whose concrete language, reassembled in perpetually surprising combinations of fragments, becomes a bold imagery that evokes a whole ancient milieu.

Such felicitous moments of responsiveness to antecedents are rare, however. Reznikoff was fascinated and bedeviled by the past, and he often seemed uncertain as to whether he should be exorcising it, integrating it into his vision, celebrating it, or perhaps perpetuating it for future readers as a kind of curse. The first half of his autobiographical novel, *By the Waters of Manhattan* (1930), is an account of his mother's girlhood in Russia and her early years in America, apparently more or less dictated to him by her, and thus conveyed in a flat, almost affectless prose. The whole section is neither inherently novelistic nor instructively relevant to the account of the dreamy, poetically inclined young man who is the protagonist of this particular novel, but it would seem that Reznikoff could not conceive of telling his own story without including an elaborate report of origins. Later, as though still pondering what might be made out of these origins, he reproduced the entire first half of the novel as the first of three sections in *Family Chronicle* (1963), only transposing the narrative from third to first person in order to make it an integral unit in the tale of his parents' movement from *shtetl* poverty to the sweatshop, boom and bust of the New York needle trade.

In the final decade of his life, Reznikoff returned twice, and at greater length than ever before, to the strategy of textually incorporating the past as verse, first in the two volumes, *Testimony: The United States 1885-1890: Recitative* (1965) and *Testimony . . . 1891-1900* (1968), and then in his last book, *Holocaust* (1975).* Both poems—at this point one hesitates a little about using that word—are versifications of documents, in the case of *Testimony*, legal and newspaper accounts of the period, in the case of *Holocaust*, the records of the Nuremberg and Eichmann trials. There is no commentary, no framing or transition devices, no embellishment, only a bearing witness by laying out the language of the documents, with unobtrusive changes, in the typographical and rhythmic emphases of free verse. From one point of view, this is the ultimate Objectivist treatment of the past, perfectly conforming to the definition Reznikoff proposed in his 1968 interview: "By the term 'objectivist' I suppose a writer may be meant who does not write directly about his feelings but about what he sees and hears; who is restricted almost to the testimony of a witness in a court of law; and who expresses his feelings indirectly by the selection of his subject-matter and, if he writes in verse, by its music." The problem is that while this technique can yield a chaste precision and suggestiveness when focused on the immediate data of the writer's own experience, its application to historical documents may lead to a kind of helplessness in the face of the raw data of history. When, moreover, on the large scale of these two long poems, the poet is choosing not a gull or a river-rat or a passing cloud to bear witness but a series of publicly recorded incidents, his bias of selection may betray him in more senses than one. These are disturbing poems, less for what they reveal about American history and the program of genocide, which is all too well known, than for what they reveal about the state of the poet's mind.

Testimony is an assemblage of narrative vignettes that almost invariably repeat the same pattern: an anecdotal situation is swiftly defined, then in the last two or three lines, the poem mechanically snaps shut with the same hard bite of disaster on some sort of killing, mutilation, ghastly accident, or brutal deception. One hardly wants to contest the presence of virulent strains of violence in American culture, or argue the fact that workers in the expanding phase of the Industrial Revolution were subject to terribly harsh and dangerous conditions. In *Testimony*, however, the selection of material and the technique of terse deadpan presentation allow nothing but bleak calamity to exist in late 19th-century America. This is not, I think, the reflection of any 60's radical view of America but of a mind that had brooded much on

* Black Sparrow Press, 111 pp., paperback, $4.00.

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American history and had finally come to be obsessed with its destructiveness, mesmerized by images of maiming and killing.

Holocaust bears exactly the same relation to recent Jewish history, where the obsession has a justification of epic scale. I suppose Reznikoff had some conscious notion, in selecting and versifying these documents, of providing "testimony" of the Nazi horrors for future generations, for readers he imagines to be so removed from the subject that he feels obliged to explain in a note what S.S. means, or that *Jude* is German for Jew. These very documents have been widely disseminated in print, anthologized, included in college textbooks, repeatedly discussed, and it is hard to see what is gained by setting them in verse. The poem is one long, unrelieved catalogue of unspeakable torture, degradation, and murder. (One might usefully compare it with Reznikoff's historical novel, *The Lionhearted,* 1944, which recounts in grisly detail the slaughter of English Jewry at the time of the Third Crusade. There the writer tries to set against his piling-on of horrors a final ringing Jewish affirmation, using the hortatory rhetoric we have observed elsewhere. But as if in the end sensing that such flourishes were no way of coming to terms with a calamitous history, he finally turned to the grimly uncompromising approach of *Holocaust.*) Symptomatically, even a section at the end of the book entitled "Escapes" proves to be mainly about failed escapes, still another series of horrible deaths in infinite variations of cruelty.

I am not, of course, suggesting that the Holocaust was any less ghastly than Reznikoff's version of it, only that there is finally a numbing pointlessness in the constant repetition of savagery and murder without the slightest interpretative response on the part of the poet, without the slightest intimation of historical options beyond or after genocide. One is ultimately led to suspect that this is an extended exercise in masochism conducted under the cover of an act of testimony. History, it would seem, had become a hypnotic vision of unrestrained murderous impulse for the poet: the ultimate breakdown of his whole problematic relation to the past is starkly evident in the flattened landscapes of disaster that take the place of round imagined worlds in these two long poems of his old age.

In all these respects, then, the past proved to be a trap for Reznikoff, but, in fairness, one must also say that there are numerous brief moments in his poetry when the involvement with Jewish antecedents introduces a background of imaginative depth to the enclosed composition of the Objectivist poem. If his affirmations of Jewish allegiance sometimes have a hollow public ring, one hears an authentic resonance in his confessions of personal estrangement from the tradition he would have liked to continue. He is supremely a poet of exile because he frequently senses in his own loving attachment to his chosen medium, the American language, an irreversible abandonment of his Hebrew forebears. The idea of Hebrew, a powerful nostalgia for Hebrew, haunts his poetry (of Yiddish, virtually his native language, no mention is made). A 1927 poem summarizes this feeling:

> How difficult for me is Hebrew:
> even the Hebrew for *mother,* for *bread,* for *sun*
> is foreign. How far have I been exiled, Zion.

And in the same vein, the poem he set at the head of *Jerusalem the Golden* begins, "The Hebrew of your poets, Zion,/ is like oil upon a burn,/ cool as oil," and concludes with this wry commentary on himself as an English poet: "Like Solomon,/ I have married and married the speech of strangers;/ none are like you, Shulamite." Reznikoff was imaginatively at home in American culture, enthusiastically devoted to it, at the center in his generation of poetic experiment in this country. Yet there was a residue of consciousness which did not allow him to sit altogether comfortably in the American scene, and this may well be his most deeply Jewish characteristic.

If Jewishness for Reznikoff is before all else a consciousness of loss, it is also on occasion an imaginative resource, and that is especially evident in the interplay between biblical allusions and personal experience in his poetry. Even in confessing his estrangement from Hebrew origins, he metaphorically invokes, as we have just seen, Solomon and the Song of Songs, shuttling between biblical texts to express his own condition with an almost midrashic deftness. Some of his poems on explicit biblical subjects are not mosaics of verses but vigorous new versions of biblical figures, meaningfully linked with the modern condition out of which the poet writes. A line from a striking early poem of this sort, "Samuel," says a good deal about Reznikoff: "I think in psalms, my mind a psalter." If the Objectivist ideal was to introduce the mind of the poet into the visual scene, this poet's mind was often teeming with remembered biblical images and phrases, which could become apertures in the present time and place looking out on large temporal and cultural perspectives. In one poem a rainstorm merges with Noah's deluge; elsewhere a lovely summer moon recalls the ancient Israelite idolatry of the moon-goddess and Jeremiah's stern warnings; or again, still more erotically, the naked moon transforms the speaker in another poem into a David gazing at Bathsheba bathing. At some of its high points Reznikoff's verse focuses its meanings through the kind of imaginative intimacy with the Bible that has been rare in English since the great Protestant poets of the 17th century like Henry Vaughan, the Milton of the sonnets, and above all George Herbert. Thus, in an Objectivist rendering of a budding tree, from *Je-*

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rusalem the Golden, the poet's mind is in fact a psalter, crystallizing his perception of the present through a musing upon Psalm 90:

This tree in the twilit street—
the pods hang from its bare symmetrical branches
motionless—
but if, like God, a century were to us
the twinkling of an eye,
we should see the frenzy of growth.

Ultimately, the sense of exclusion from the continuity of Jewish history of which Reznikoff wrote so plangently was not absolute: if you can talk about being in exile with such feeling, that may mean that at least some small part of you belongs, after all, to a realm of rootedness against which the condition of exile is defined. Reznikoff was not an observant Jew and not in any strict sense a religious poet, but the theological perspectives and the ethical values of the tradition he so esteemed do exert pressure at many points in his work, and there are moments when the poet seems to have genuinely assimilated traditional values consonant with his own instead of just ritually affirming them. The still, small reflective voice, hushed with humility, of some of the Psalms and of certain texts from the liturgy, was probably closest to his own, and on occasion he could use it to speak poignantly, as in his cycle, "Meditations on the Fall and Winter Holidays," and some of the related poems that appear with it in *Inscriptions*. A poem entitled "Epilogue" from his last collection of short verse, *By the Well of Living and Seeing* (1969), is a perfect expression of this voice, an apt illustration of Reznikoff speaking as a Jewish poet not in the forensic sweep of a historical gesture but in his fundamental feeling for existence. The poem distills a personal meaning from Ecclesiastes 11:7 ("And the light is sweet, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun"); from the traditional *birkhot ha-nehenin*, the formulas by which a Jew daily blesses what he enjoys in this world; and perhaps also from the Psalmist's sense of human transience. For a moment, the gap closed between his own English and that remembered Hebrew cool as oil on a burn, and with a language wholly his own but also the tradition's, he could sum up his sense of life:

Blessed
in the light of the sun and at the sight of the world daily,
and in all the delights of the senses and the mind;
in my eyesight, blurred as it is,
and my knowledge, slight though it is,
and my life, brief though it was.

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Party & International Politics

Daniel P. Moynihan

It is common nowadays to hear the world described in images suggesting that it has grown smaller: a global village; spaceship earth. A succession of sages discover that we are become interdependent. (Among the first of these were Marx and Engels, who used the term in the *Communist Manifesto.*)

Less common, but nonetheless recurrent, is the observation that while the world may be growing smaller, there is also a sense in which it is becoming more complex, inasmuch as the number of nation states which are recognized members of the international community has grown very considerably in only half a century. Forty-one states started the League of Nations, with a handful of defeated powers temporarily excluded. Fifty-one states started the United Nations, again with a handful of powers temporarily in limbo. But by now membership of the UN has already reached 147 and seating is to be provided for 165.

In response to all this, it is now being said that Orwell's forecast for 1984 must not only be revised, but reversed: the world is not, after all, to evolve by a relentless logic of aggregation into three vast sovereignties locked in desultory but permanent conflict. Rather, it is proposed that something closer to regression is taking place, that we are relapsing into the timeless mode of tribal fragmentation and strife. Not hegemony but anarchy is to be our fate, or at all events our near future.

It will be seen that these two views are essentially epiphenomena of the main political tendencies of the age in which they arose. The 19th century was an age in which political units, in the main, became larger, the principal exception being the Turkish empire. In the 20th century they have become smaller. First, empires were put together. Next, they were broken up. We are left with contradictory impressions, if one may so describe the main geopolitical conceptions of the present time. On the one hand, immanent world order; on the other hand, emergent world chaos.

For all the seeming incompatibility of these two views, the world itself does not appear overly troubled by the inability of philosophers to agree on which direction things are heading. Is this because of an as-yet-unarticulated perception that there is some inner logic connecting both events, such that they are not incompatible after all, but rather complementary and reinforcing? Let me suggest that this may indeed be the case—that a distinctive world political order *is* emerging, that this world order is made up of an increasing number of distinct sovereignties, and that these multiple sovereignties are learning to manage their affairs in a fairly coherent and instrumental fashion through the formation of what by analogy may be called world political parties.

The term "political parties" was born, as the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* records, in the 19th century with the development of representative institutions and the expansion of the suffrage in Europe and the United States. And yet, the encyclopedia continues, there is still a "scarcity of viable party theory." Instead one finds, as in much of political science, various degrees of advocacy representing themselves as analysis. A tradition associated with the continent sees parties as an instrument of their membership, characteristically that of an incipiently revolutionary mass. An Anglo-Saxon tradition sees parties as an institution devised or evolved for the public good, and in that sense primarily responsive to the electorate as a whole. In America the Founders' distrust of "faction" persists, and analysis concentrates on why parties and party members behave as they do, the assumption usually being that some powerful motive—gain—must be adduced to account for the general aberrance.

Not much to go on, but Harvey Mansfield, Jr., has offered us a perspective which helps to further the analysis. In his reading of Burke's advocacy of party—a heretical stance at the time, and in Mansfield's judgment a prophetic one—party would give stability and longevity to ideals and standards of public conduct which might well reside in great men but, great men being no less mortal than others, could not in that way alone endure. It was all very well for the great peers of his age to be "above party"—much as Madison and Hamilton would wish such Americans to be—but what would remain after the first yellow-fever epidemic or, for that matter, the first idiot heir?

In sum, party evolves out of the sheer organizational needs of large political systems, and from the sense many will have that ideals and objectives should be given a stable institutional setting. Thus they constitute a kind of routinization of charisma, a phenomenon with which Max Weber has made us familiar. And there is Emerson: "An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man." Either way: first the great leader or leaders of the movement, then the party to carry on the tradition—sometimes

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faithfully, but never to the satisfaction of all.

To be sure, not all this applies to the history of international relations in the 20th century, but enough of it does to make for a suggestive parallel. Party arises with the advent of representative institutions and the expansion of the suffrage: precisely what this century has brought into the international sphere. Of course, neither the League of Nations nor the United Nations evolved out of representative impulses. Both amounted to arrangements by which a handful of nations momentarily very much in the ascendant in world affairs attempted to arrange those affairs so that their ascendancy should be enabled to persist. We may recall Theodore Roosevelt's address to the Nobel Committee of May 5, 1910, which is frequently cited in discourses on the origins of the League:

> Finally, it would be a masterstroke if those great powers bent on peace would form a league of peace, not only to keep the peace among themselves, but to prevent, by force if necessary, its being broken by others.

And then Ruhl J. Bartlett has reminded us of the preemptive nature of so much of this enterprise in his study of the League to Enforce Peace—to *enforce* peace.

But shortly after the Treaty of Versailles, what might at least be seen as tendencies toward party appeared. This was most pronounced where economic issues were involved. The International Labor Organization, after all, was designed on party principles: it was comprised of a workers' party, a business party, and a government party. (That government would be a party showed more foresight than perhaps was recognized at the time.) Within the League of Nations itself, the advent of Hitler's Germany produced a movement of "have-not" nations protesting the inequities of the international economic order and demanding a new one—very likely to be led by Germany. This development never went very far since the League managed to expel the dictatorships, recognizing at least that they would never abide by the Covenant.

With the end of World War II, a formal peace settlement proved impossible, but an international system was reconstituted, including the various representative bodies of the United Nations, all of which experienced a rapidly expanding suffrage, in the sense that more and more entities were declared nations and given the right to vote. Almost immediately two blocs of nations, Eastern and Western, Communist and anti-Communist (or whatever) took form. They differed on fundamental political issues and commenced to vote as blocs against each other in various international settings, including the parliamentary settings of the United Nations. The formation of these two blocs led in turn to the formation of a third, the nonaligned nations, which proclaimed a distinct identity—and program—as regards the other two.

In short order most nation-states were to be found in one group or another. Gradually they began to conduct themselves in the manner of political parties. (One might emphasize the gradual nature of this development, and note that this too parallels the experience of national representative bodies. The British have produced the maxim that the function of the opposition is to oppose, but it was only very late in the 19th century that the opposition in Westminster began automatically to vote against whatever it was the government proposed, and to do so as a disciplined bloc.)

In time the organization of the three competing blocs grew more complex, especially that of the Communists and the nonaligned. Conferences were convened, complete with party secretariats and party manifestos. Regional subdivisions such as the Organization of African Unity appeared, while at the United Nations specific caucuses developed, notably the Group of 77 (now some 116 states) which functions in a manner not dissimilar to the parliamentary Labor party in Westminster—that is, as a legislative subdivision of a larger party organization.

There are many nations today. Tomorrow there may be many more. This is the discrete contribution of ethnicity to the present world order. It is the demand for ethnic distinctness and separateness that has brought about the breakup of the great empires, all save that of the Soviet Union, and which promises to go further and break up many of the newer entities formed from the old empires. There is nothing inevitable about this prospect—certainly the African states have so far successfully avoided such fragmentation. But still, there is little reason to suppose that the most dynamic political force of this era has yet spent itself. And the more the world comes apart in this respect, the more it will be forced to come together again in various party groupings.

The advent of party often takes political systems by surprise, perhaps especially planned political systems. Certainly that has been the American experience. For all the genius of the framers of the American Constitution, they did not foresee, indeed strove with all their unexampled ingenuity to prevent, the emergence of "faction." And yet faction there was almost from the outset, and most would agree that faction has had much to do with the stability of the American political system, or at least of its capacity to endure.

May not something similar be true of the advent of party on the international scene? The world in the near term had to turn out some way, and this way is scarcely the least promising. An international society developing institutions analogous to those which appear to serve national societies reasonably well provides some ground for reassurance.

So FAR as the United States is concerned, at the very least this analysis suggests a conceptual framework in which we might better come to grips with a number of problems that trouble us, which indeed at times seem to baffle us. At the United Nations and other international agencies, for example, we seem to persist in the manner of Whig magnates determined to be "above party" and both bewildered by and out of sorts with the great majority of nations who insist on acting otherwise. Let me give three

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recent examples of how this operates to our disadvantage.

On July 26, 1973 the United States vetoed a proposed Indian resolution in the Security Council which was strongly condemnatory of Israel for its continued occupation of the territories seized in the 1967 war. The resolution had not the least balance to it. That Security Council Resolution 242, the basic Middle East agreement, then as now called for Arab recognition of the state of Israel, and for secure borders for Israel, was quite ignored. In this sense the proposed Indian resolution fundamentally revised the earlier one, and the United States was altogether right to veto it. Yet the United States did so alone, with no support from any other nation. The United States was seen to be isolated, and yet adamant. In the Egyptian version of the event, the American veto led directly to the judgment in Cairo that there was no alternative to war. And the Yom Kippur war followed. It may be said on the "highest authority" that the Department of State now agrees that the veto of the Indian resolution was a major influence in the Egyptian decision to attack.

Now what business had India in sponsoring such a resolution? None, save party business. India was acting not in its own interest but for the nonaligned, putting its still considerable prestige forward on behalf of a party view about a region which from the perspective of New Delhi could surely be described as a faraway place of which they knew little. I was at that precise moment United States Ambassador to India, trying to negotiate a settlement of the vast rupee debt we had accumulated there in return for the grain shipments of the 1960's. We owned, by rough count, the equivalent of two thirds of the Indian currency, and the Indian government was obsessed with this fact. It was entirely within the powers of American diplomacy to get the Indians to stop their troublemaking in New York. Their ambassador was a not very high-ranking civil servant, and the Indians made nothing at home of what they were doing in Turtle Bay. Yet no such American effort was undertaken. Washington never asked. In New Delhi we were barely aware that anything was happening. American policy was blind to the essential reality. It did not see India acting as an instrument of party politics within a world order and on a world scale. There was no conceptual framework which enabled American policy-makers to make any sense of the Indian behavior. And so they ignored it—at what we must judge to be considerable cost to the West.

A SECOND example. In 1974, Congress, at the behest of the AFL-CIO, began withholding its contributions to the International Labor Organization and faced an automatic suspension of membership. Our withdrawal would have been (and would be, for the issue is not yet settled) an extraordinary event. We helped found the ILO. We joined it when we joined no other League organization. It is an institution unique in its association with Americans—with Gompers, with Wilson, with Roosevelt, and above all with free trade unionism. And yet by 1974 the American labor movement wanted out. And what was their complaint? Not that free trade unions were no longer in a majority in Geneva as they once had been. What the representatives of the American labor movement had come to judge intolerable was that on critical votes, where they were prepared to be defeated, they found themselves not defeated but annihilated. It is one thing to lose in an international forum with thirty free countries at your side. It is another thing to go down in the company only of New Zealand, Costa Rica, and (not always) Israel. Not least—as in the case of the Indian resolution in the Security Council—such lopsided votes signal the anti-democratic and non-democratic nations alike that the West really doesn't stand by its professed principles. It signals decline.

The American labor movement was right. The United States has since resumed paying ILO dues, but has given the required two-year notice of intention to withdraw. This year at the International Labor Conference the Americans and others set the whips to work, if that image may be used, and at last the true voting strength of the West reappeared. In effect, an experiment is being run. If the American government will do this—will act as the leader of a party—the labor movement is more than willing for us to remain in the ILO. If not, not.

A final instance. On November 10, 1975 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution declaring Zionism to be a form of racism. The United States had fought hard against this measure, declaring it to be an obscenity, declaring it to be a threat to peace in the region and to the world organization itself. The resolution nonetheless passed, with 72 votes in a membership of 143. Even so, to cite but one region, a majority of non-Muslim African states voted with us. The anti-Israel bloc got fewer votes that day than in any similar encounter in a decade. Despite this, a tumult of whispers immediately began: if we hadn't fought, we wouldn't have lost. The State Department panicked. A year went by. The same sequence commenced once more, with resolutions somewhat less dramatic but every bit as squalid and poisonous as those of 1975. This time the United States was "reasonable." And this time the vote against Israel, instead of being two to one, was five to one. On the same day, a not less vicious anti-Western resolution dealing with South Africa was adopted 110-8.

The *Wall Street Journal*, at least, noted the event:

> . . . the United States must vigorously defend its position in the UN or be submerged by bombast. America is still likely to come out on the losing end of votes, given the makeup of the UN, but it is essential not to accept defeat without making a serious effort to defend one's values and beliefs. Is it really so surprising that the more the UN majority is convinced the U.S. lacks the will to fight back, the harder it will press its attacks?

And yet one grows convinced that the great obstacle to an effective American defense is that we do not yet see that our adversaries—

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some mortal, some merely adversaries in the way politics shapes tendencies—have organized and conduct themselves with some partisan cohesion. It is time we did the same. This means accepting the idea of party, setting about to organize, in effect, a party of our own, and getting down to the business of interparty competition, an exercise for which we are well suited by national temperament and experience.

It is not only a matter of defending ourselves in debate. While the nonaligned have the advantage of numbers in the present world system—votes are in that sense a resource—the West has an equally or more important resource, which is money. If the United States were to think in party terms, we would see that it is to our advantage to withhold our resource so long as others withhold theirs. In the end, one trades. It is of the essence of a healthy party system.

In Praise of New York

A Semi-Secular Homily

Peter L. Berger

DIFFERENT cities acquire great symbolic significance at different moments in human history. Paris was significant in this way in the 18th and 19th centuries, as was London (though perhaps to a lesser degree), and Rome, over and beyond anything that was actually going on there, has retained its powerful symbolic character over many centuries. New York City undoubtedly has a comparable symbolic significance today. It is perceived as a symbol of modernity, of Western civilization, and (despite the often-repeated statement that "New York is not America") of the civilization of the United States. The curious thing is that it is very widely perceived as a negative symbol—that is, as a metaphor of everything that has gone wrong with our society.

Much of the rest of the country sees New York as one gigantic agglomeration of social ills: crime, poverty, racial hatred, mismanaged and corrupt government—not to mention dirt, pollution, and traffic congestion of virtually metaphysical dimensions. The same perceptions have been widely diffused abroad, and foreign tourists come here with the piquant ambivalence of apprehension and fascination that used to go with dangerous expeditions into the jungles of central Africa. Interestingly, New York City has negative symbolic value right across the political spectrum. As seen from the Right, New York is the habitat of an anti-American intellectual and media establishment, bent on converting the entire nation into the decadent welfare state that the city, supposedly, has already become. Seen from the Left, New York is, above all, Wall Street—the heart of the beast, headquarters of capitalist imperialism, the cosmic cancer; Madison Avenue has a slightly lesser place in this particular demonological vision. Cutting across the political dividing lines there also exists today a widespread cultural mood of anti-urbanism. Vaguely linked with the ecology movement, this mood offers yet another incentive to deplore New York.

And yet, despite all this, New York City continues to be a magnet and even an object of love, sometimes fierce love. People, especially young people, continue to come in large numbers, irresistibly drawn to the city by expectations of success and excitement. And New Yorkers themselves, although they, too, frequently share the negative views of their own city, nevertheless continue to be inexplicably, perhaps dementedly, attached to the putative cesspool of perdition in which they reside. Such ambivalence suggests that the reality of New York is more complicated than its symbolic imagery. And so, of course, it is. For New York City—not New York in some romanticized past, not New York in some utopian future, but New York today—can, I would argue, best be understood as a signal of transcendence.

The currently fashionable anti-urbanism concentrates on the harsh empirical facts about the city. To speak of New York City as a signal of transcendence is neither to ignore nor to deny these facts. Rather, it is to try for a glimpse of

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another reality, which is both hidden under and hinted at by the reality of this world. In other words, to speak of a signal of transcendence is to make an assertion about the presence of redemptive power in human life. Such assertions, needless to say, lie at the very center of the Judeo-Christian view of the world.

An exploration into the possibilities of New York as a signal of transcendence must begin with the root fact that it is not only a vast and vastly important city, but *the* city *par excellence*, the prototypical cosmopolis of our age. In other words, while New York may no longer be the largest city in the world, it is still the world's most potent symbol of urbanism and urbanity (two related but distinct matters). This is why visitors and new arrivals feel at home in New York so quickly. Every urban experience that they have had before has been, in a way, an anticipation of New York, and the encounter with the real thing thus has a strong note of familiarity, of *déjà vu* (quite apart from the fact that the major landmarks of New York are known everywhere and serve as instant orientations for the newcomers). Wherever skyscrapers reach up toward the clouds, wherever masses of cars stream back and forth over steel-girded bridges, wherever heterogeneous crowds pour through subways, underground concourses, or cavernous lobbies encased in glass—there is a bit of New York. Conversely, the New Yorker visiting other cities finds everywhere the sights and sounds, even the smells, that remind him of home. The mystique of New York City is, above all, the mystique of modern urban life, concentrated there more massively than anywhere else.

It is not accidental, I think, that the biblical imagery of redemptive fulfillment is so persistently urban. Jerusalem became the focus of religious devotion from an early period of the spiritual history of ancient Israel, and it has remained the holy city in both Jewish and Christian religious imagination ever since. And this same Jerusalem, of course, came to be transformed into an image of eschatological expectation—the Jerusalem that is to come, the heavenly city, "its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal." Biblical scholars disagree on the precise origins and status of the Zion tradition in the Old Testament, on the religious significance of Jerusalem at, say, the time of David and Solomon, and on the significance of the various images in the Apocalypse. Yet there seems to be far-reaching consensus on one rather simple point: the city as a sociopolitical formation marks a transition in human history from bonds based exclusively on kinship to more comprehensive human relationships. Perhaps this was not the case everywhere, but it was clearly so in the ancient Mediterranean world. Here cities—as markets, centers of political or military administration, and sanctuaries—served to weaken and eventually to liquidate the archaic bonds of blood, of clan, and of tribe.

Max Weber has argued that, in this, cities are incipiently "rationalizing"—that is, they constitute a social and political order based on reason, as against an older order based on magical taboos. This development reached a dramatic climax in the emergence of the Greek *polis*, but it is not fanciful to suggest that the biblical imagery of the city served as a religious legitimation of the same underlying liberation from the magic of the blood. Whatever else the city is, it is a place where *different* people come together and find a new unity with each other—and, in the context of the ancient world, that is a revolutionary event. What all this suggests is that the city is a signal of transcendence inasmuch as it embodies universalism and freedom.

If universalism is a root urban characteristic, then surely New York is the most universalistic of cities. And, of course, it is this quality of universalism that most impresses the newcomer and that is so often bragged about by the native. Here they are all pressed together, in this small space, all the races and all the nations of the earth. A short subway ride separates worlds of mind-boggling human diversity—black Harlem borders on the Upper West Side, the *barrio* on the territory of East Side swingers, the Village on Little Italy, Chinatown on the financial district. And that is only in Manhattan, beyond which lie the mysterious expanses of the boroughs—places like Greenpoint, Bay Ridge, or Boro Park, each one a world of meaning and belonging almost unpenetrated by outsiders. In this city you can enter a phone booth shaped like a pagoda, and make a reservation in a Czechoslovak restaurant (or, more precisely, in one of *several* Czechoslovak restaurants). You can spend weeks doing nothing else, if you have the leisure, than savoring the world's greatest concentration of museums, art galleries, musical and theatrical performances, and other cultural happenings of every conceivable kind from the sublime to the unspeakable. When I first lived in New York as a student, I had a job as a receptionist in a now-defunct dispensary on the Lower East Side. I still recall with pleasure my lunch hours: I would buy a bialy with lox in the old Essex Street Market, munch it while strolling through the teeming street life at the foot of the Williamsburg Bridge, and then have a quiet coffee with baklava in one of several Turkish cafés over on Allen Street, surrounded by old men smoking water-pipes and playing checkers (apparently their only occupation). What I recall most of all is the exhilarating sense that here I was, in New York City, where all these things were going on and where, in principle, everything was possible.

These mundane facts carry redemptive meaning. They point to the promise that all of humanity in its incredible variety is God's concern, and that the divine culmination of history will mean not the end but the glorious transfiguration of every truly human expression. The city of messianic fulfillment too will contain every human type and condition—and in this, necessarily, it will resemble New York. There is also the promise that the same culmination will be the reign of perfect freedom under God. Until then, all liberations are incomplete, some are illusory. All the same, wherever human beings

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are liberated from oppression or narrowness to wider horizons of life, thought, and imagination, there is a foreshadowing of the final liberation that is to come. It is in this sense—in the exhilaration of its pluralism and its freedom—that New York City is a signal of transcendence.

To some extent the characteristics of universalism and freedom are endemic to urban life nearly everywhere, in varying degrees. The distinctiveness of New York comes from the enormous magnitude of these features here. The same may be said of another characteristic which, I propose, may be taken as a signal of transcendence: the city is a place of hope.

If there is any New York legend that is generally known, it is that of the immigrant, and the legend, of course, has as its most famous physical representation the Statue of Liberty. This legend is, above all, a story of hope. I myself arrived in America a short time after World War II, very poor and very young, after a long ocean voyage that sticks in my memory as an endless bout with seasickness. The ship sailed into New York harbor in the early morning, in a dense fog, so that very little could be seen at first. Then dramatically, the fog was pierced, and we saw first the Statue, which seemed perilously close to the ship, and then the skyline of Lower Manhattan. All the passengers (a motley crowd indeed) were assembled on the deck, and there was an awed silence. But, curiously, what impressed me most at the time was not these majestic sights; I had, after all, expected to see them. There was something else. As the ship sailed up the Hudson toward its pier, I was fascinated by the traffic on what I later learned was the West Side Highway. All these cars seemed enormous to me. But more than their size, it was their colors that astonished me. This was before New York taxis all came to be painted yellow; then, they came in every color of the rainbow, though yellow was predominant. Only, I didn't know that these garish cars were taxis. The exuberance of color, I thought, was characteristic of ordinary American automobiles. This, then, was my first unexpected sight in New York, and it pleased me greatly. I don't think I quite put it this way to myself, but implicit in my visual pleasure was the notion that someday I too might be driving past the skyscrapers in a bright yellow car of surrealistic proportions, engaged (no doubt) in some business of great importance, and enjoying the company of the most beautiful woman imaginable.

As immigrant stories go, mine has been lucky. Indeed, I could say that New York has kept all its promises to me. I know full well that this has not been so for all newcomers to the city. If New York has been a place of hope, it has also been a place of disappointed hope, of shattered expectations, of bitterness and despair. It has been fashionable of late to stress this negative aspect of the American dream—mistakenly so, I believe, because America has fulfilled many more expectations than it has frustrated. I would even go farther than that. The currently fashionable intellectuals, who decry the hopefulness of America, are far more in a state of "false consciousness" than the millions of immigrants who came and who continue to come to America full of hope.

Nevertheless, just as it would be false to speak of the universalism and the freedom of this city without also speaking of the sordid underside of these facts, so it would be dishonest to pretend that the hopeful message emblazoned on the Statue of Liberty is an accurate description of empirical reality. Of course it is not. And yet the proclamation of hope to all those who came here across the ocean is a signal of transcendent portent. For all of us, men and women of this aeon, are on a long journey, across vast and dangerous seas, toward a city of hope.

There is more: New York is a place of useless labor. Just compare New York with an honest-to-goodness industrial city, like Detroit or Pittsburgh, or even Chicago. In these cities most people are engaged in labor that has at least an indirect relation to economic utility. Certainly there are such people in New York. The peculiarity of New York, however, is the large portion of its labor force employed in activities which only the most ingenious economic theory can interpret as a contribution to the gross national product. Leave aside the enormous number of people working in municipal government and other public services (and leave aside the very timely question of how long the city will be able to afford them): one is still left with legions of people making their livelihood, or at least trying to do so, through activities which, economically speaking, are bizarre. Promoters of Renaissance music, producers of non-verbal theater, translators of Swahili literature, purveyors of esoteric erotica, agents of nonexistent governments, revolutionaries in exile, Egyptologists, numismatic experts, scream therapists, guidance counselors for geriatric recreation, Indonesian chefs, belly-dancers and teachers of belly-dancing (and, for all I know, belly-dancing therapists)—not to mention individuals who are on university payrolls to provide instruction in phenomenological sociology.

A Chicagoan will know what to say to all this: these people can't be serious. Precisely! The opposite of being serious is being playful; the invincible playfulness of New York City is, I believe, in itself a signal of transcendence. *Homo ludens* is closer to redemption than *homo faber*; the clown is more of a sacramental figure than the engineer. And we have very good reason to expect that paradise will be a very playful affair—and in *that*, at the very least, it will resemble New York more than Chicago.

New Yorkers, like the inhabitants of other large cities are supposed to be sophisticated. The word, of course, is related to sophistry—the ability to be clever with words, to be quick, to be surprised at nothing. This notion of sophistication is closely related to that of urbanity, and it is as much a source of pride for the urbanite as it is a provocation to others. Somebody once defined a true metropolis as a place where an individual can march down the street wearing a purple robe and a hat with bells

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on, beating a drum and leading an elephant by the leash—and only get casual glances from passers-by. If so, then surely New York is the truest metropolis there is. To some extent, of course, this is but another expression of the aforementioned universalism. But, in addition, the city is a place of magic. And in that too it offers us a signal of transcendence.

I don't mean occultism, though there is enough of that around as well. I mean magic in a more ample sense, what Rudolf Otto called the *mysterium fascinans*—namely, the quality of the surreal, the intuition that reality is manipulable, unpredictable, subject to the strangest metamorphoses at any moment. The British author Jonathan Raban, in his curious book *Soft City*, argues that modern urban life is characterized by magic, and *not* (as it is more customarily thought to be) by rationality. I think that there is much to be said for this view; Raban also maintains that New York has this magic in a particularly potent form. The magic of the city can be summed up in a sentence that points to a recurring experience: anything can happen here—and it could happen right now.

Magic always has its dark side, and it is hardly necessary to spell out the sinister possibilities of the insight that anything can happen. But it would be a mistake to limit the experience to its negative aspect. The city is a place of strangers and of strangeness, and this very fact implies a fascination of a special kind. Ordinary-looking houses contain unimaginable mysteries within. Casual encounters are transformed into revelations of shocking impact. Passions explode on the most unexpected occasions. All this helps to account for the excitement of the city, but it also makes for a general vision of the world. Reality is not what it seems; there are realities behind the reality of everyday life; the routine fabric of our ordinary lives is not self-contained, it has holes in it, and there is no telling what wondrous things may at any moment rush in through these holes.

This vision of the world is perhaps not itself religious, but it is in close proximity to the root insights of the religious attitude. The magic of the city should not be identified with religious experience, but it may be said to be an antechamber of the latter. When people say that New York City is a surrealistic place, they are saying more than they intend. They are making a religious statement about the reality of human life: behind the empirical city lurks *another city*, a city of dreams and wonders. They are also making a statement about redemption: for redemption always comes into the world as a big surprise, even as a cosmic joke. Anything at all can come through the holes in the fabric of ordinary reality: a man leading an elephant by the leash—or Elijah returning in his fiery chariot to herald the dawn of our salvation.

BETWEEN Rutgers University, where I teach, and Brooklyn, where I live, I regularly travel by crossing from Staten Island over the Verrazzano Bridge. It has often occurred to me, especially in the evening when the light is soft and the contours of visual reality seem to lack firmness, that the entrance to heaven may well look something like this wonderful bridge, with its majestic arcs and its breathtaking vistas on both sides. The transcendent hope of both Jewish and Christian piety is, quite simply, this: that in the evening of our lives we shall be part of this traffic and that we will know that, in the city on the other side of the bridge, what awaits us is home. I for one would not be overly surprised if the gatekeeper were to address me in a Brooklyn accent.

Fiction

Ann Beattie & the 60's

John Romano

ANN BEATTIE's stories have been appearing in the *New Yorker* for the past few years, and have now been collected in a volume called *Distortions*,* published simultaneously with the author's *Chilly Scenes of Winter*,† a novel. It is unusual, of course, for a new author to appear with two books at once, but evidently Ann Beattie has been able to compel special treatment from her publisher as well as from reviewers and readers. It is the uniqueness of her talent that compels. Her best fiction renders a distinctive subject matter in a distinctive tone, and the note she sounds is powerfully her own.

Her subject matter is a certain shiftlessness and lack of self-apprehension besetting people in their twenties and thirties: a former Phi Beta Kappa guiltily resigned to living on welfare checks, young wives rejecting husbands and lovers in desultory and emotionless gestures of independence, a lesbian feminist whose only friends are male. She conveys the drabness of these lives by her tone and by an almost hallucinatory particularity of detail.

JOHN ROMANO *teaches English at Columbia. His study of Dickens will be published by Columbia University Press later this year.*

* Doubleday, 283 pp., $7.95.
† Doubleday, 280 pp., $7.95.

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We are taken on that round of grocery shopping, walking the dog, getting the worthless car fixed, which Auden had in mind when he said that "in headaches and in worry,/Vaguely life leaks away." But Beattie's writing is not tedious; there is, instead, something graceful and painstaking about her fidelity to the ordinary.

The story, "Imagined Scenes," presents a young woman who works nights sitting up with an old man who has insomnia, while her husband, a graduate student, is busy studying for his oral exams. Or so she assumes. The daily schedules of the couple barely overlap. They do not inhabit the same hours, and there is something chilling and mysterious about the gap between them. When she returns home in the mornings, there are frequent signs of inexplicable activity: three coffee cups on the table, or a favorite plant missing. Once when she calls home at four in the morning there is no answer. Her husband's explanations are plausible—a couple she has never met came to visit, he was asleep when the phone rang—but they are oddly insufficient, too, and seem slightly sinister in the haze of mutual incomprehension. The glimpses, the physical data, which the woman has of her husband's life in her absence tell her nothing, though they hint at guilty secrets. They cannot be either ignored or interpreted. Scattered among them are the monologues of her patient, the old man, which are very skillfully made to seem only accidentally relevant to the woman's puzzling home life. We are given nothing more. However, a suggestion of the peculiar way in which Beattie makes such material her own lurks in the title: "Imagined Scenes." We do not realize, or not all at once, that what the young woman has "imagined" is not her husband's private or guilty activity. She has accepted not the explanations but the sufficiency unto themselves of the physical facts. She "imagines" only that she is in Greece, or someplace warm, by the sea, while the scene of her actual present life is snowy. It is the reader who has been seduced into guessing at the husband's hidden life.

I dwell on this short story because it seems to me emblematic of Beattie's skill in this genre. But one thing more should be said about it, which goes rather beyond skill. We guess at the "real facts" of the woman's life because we care about her, her sadness has been made significant. It follows that the author has cared about her in the making. But then it is more astonishing to perceive that the woman cares so little, so indistinctly, for herself. She is not suspicious, she has no imagination; the mark of Beattie's respect for this creation is not to have slipped her some healthy suspicion, as it were, under the counter. In this forbearance the writer resembles some impossible ideal of a loving parent who succeeds in not interfering in her children's lives. To love one's characters—Tolstoy is the presiding genius here—is to allow them to be who they are.

A risk of a particular kind attends this achievement and Beattie is not immune to it. The style of much "serious fiction" in recent years has tended to be cool, to attend scrupulously to the surface of events, with a language pruned and polished in respect of its own surface. Now Beattie's writing has something in common with this style: her sentences are often plain, flat, their grammar exposed like the lighting fixtures in avant-garde furniture boutiques, and the effect is at first wearying. Only later does the sympathetic center of her work betray itself. We may feel misled by the outward reserve, but, again, her willingness to distort when necessary, her passion for the particular, is ultimately an index of her concern for the integrity of things and people in themselves.

Many of the people in these books verge on the grotesque—dwarfs, a cleaning woman hulking in mind and body who believes she was a cat in a former life. Here, too, Beattie risks a convergence with her slicker contemporaries, whose fascination with the grotesque is full of smugness about what is "normal." (Beattie herself invokes the photographs of Diane Arbus in several places, but I for one have never quite decided what Arbus's relation to her subjects really was.) There is a dog in *Chilly Scenes of Winter* who is a good example of Beattie's success with the grotesque. The dog is purchased to replace an entirely admirable dog who has died of old age, much mourned. But the new dog is ugly—part dachshund, part cocker spaniel—as well as hapless and insomniac. And yet, the people around him feel the dog must be fed and must not be compared to his predecessor; at night, his audible perambulations must be endured. Because, "terrible genetic mistake" that he is, the dog, named "Dog," is real and undeniable. He is part of that world of fact that Beattie honors almost compulsively, whatever its unwelcomeness or distortion.

THE central figure of the novel, *Chilly Scenes of Winter*, is a young man named Charles, whose quality of self-ignorance is Beattie's fullest, most intelligent image. He does not know that he is smart, and apparently does not wish to know it, because he has chosen to work in a government office where his abilities are irrelevant. He does not know that he is kind: his many services to others are unmarked by signs of sympathy, generosity, concern, or liking; he is made dizzy by his sister's assertion that he is good. His knowledge that he is unhappy is merely circumstantial. Approaching thirty, he has come to terms with none of the absurd relationships that comprise his life. His mother is "emotionally disturbed," prone to nakedness and sloppy, day-long bathing. Pete, his alcoholic stepfather, depends pathetically on his reluctant friendship. Laura, whom Charles loves but seems—sometimes—to have lost, is married. Charles spends much of the book driving slowly past her house, for the sight of the light in her window. ("What's this, *The Great Gatsby* or something?" his friend quips)—only to discover, near the end, that she had moved out weeks ago. Charles's only workable relationship is with his friend Sam, his constant companion, who is present on nearly every page. It is significant that Sam as portrayed by Beattie is dull, shapeless, unrealized. His friendship with Charles is

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at once blank and affectionate. Its very existence is capable of surprising them, when they must notice it:

> "You're my only friend," Charles says.
> "You're *my* only friend," Sam says.
> "That's pathetic," Charles says.
> "How did this happen?"
> "I don't know. I just stopped seeing people or they moved or something."

Charles and Sam know nothing, in fact, about the causes of their loneliness except the details of the pleasureless routine it imposes upon them. Charles is forever gazing hungrily into a cupboard bare of anything except Tuna Stretcher and a jar of pickles, forever wondering at the existential courage of people who do all their shopping on one day for the week ahead. "Maybe Edward Hopper? Or a cartoon?" he asks of the world that takes place around him, mingling the surreal and the mundane:

> He sits at the counter next to an old woman who smells of mint. Her hair rolls away from her face in even waves. A shopping bag is wedged between her feet. There is a dirty white towel over whatever is in the shopping bag. The woman is drinking black coffee, into which she empties three packs of "Sweet 'n Low." She is humming "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." Charles orders tea with lemon. A priest comes in and greets the old woman enthusiastically. She moves from the counter to a booth with him, knocking Charles as she draws out her shopping bag. Something moves under the towel: a cat. A striped cat.

The scene is unnerving, as Charles distinctly feels; but he feels, too, that it is harmless, and that it is a mistake to be unnerved. It awakens in him the conviction of his own paranoia: "sleeping people in public places are always dead." But on second look it is over-shrewd to shrug off the latent threat. The brand name drifts mysteriously into the song lyric. The shopping bag is alive. Charles's eye for detail reflects the paradox of Beattie's own: a passive accuracy of observation masks an active, unsettling distrust of what one sees.

The word game of "Sweet 'n Low" brings to mind one aspect of Ann Beattie's writing that seems to me regrettable. Charles's mother's baths, his own baths, his sister's showers; Sam's car, Pete's car; dogs and cats; medical references, doctors, disease—all these constitute what used to be called "motifs" or images. Details drifting from person to person, thing to thing, they bend too steadily and purposefully toward significance, betraying an obtrusive self-consciousness about craft which is rather rare in Beattie's work. This seems to me directly at odds with the vitality of her talent, her capacity to conjure the independence and actuality of things.

GIVEN her particular subject matter, it hardly seems necessary to underline Beattie's pertinence to the present cultural-political pass. In *Chilly Scenes of Winter,* in the story "Fancy Flights," and elsewhere, our attention is called to a contemporary pathos whose effects few have yet begun to gauge: the sadness over the passing of the 60's. It is by no means necessary to feel this nostalgia in order to ponder its importance. Let me say at once that Beattie herself does not seem sad. Some reviewers have referred to the image in "Fancy Flights" of an ex-hippie locked in his bathroom, smoking dope and talking to his daughter's bunny rabbit, with the Mick Jagger lyric running through his mind: "All the dreams we held so close all seemed to go up in smoke." But the reviewers have failed to remark that this is one of Beattie's only *un*sympathetic portraits, the only one of her protagonists she doesn't like.

Charles's lament for the passing of the 60's, which is more to the point, occurs in abrupt, anxious seizures of lostness and bewilderment. "Elvis Presley is forty," he says. "Jim Morrison's *widow* is dead." The tone is that same tone in which he laments the waning quality of Hydrox cookies: "What happened to them? They used to be so good. Sugar. No doubt they're leaving out sugar." It is witty of Beattie to confine the sociological import of her novel to such trivial remarks. She conveys adroitly the sensibility of After-the-Fall, without making fictive claims for the heights from which we fell. The Golden Age mythology and its attendant rhetoric will inevitably attach, for a while, to talk about the 60's. This represents, of course, a historical distortion, matched in its badness of fit only by the myth that the New Left was the Antichrist. Beattie's presentation of Charles's nostalgia for the 60's suggests that such longing has the limits of an elegy to lost innocence, and the advantages, too. It distorts, but it also provides, however disingenuously, the idea that things can be better than they are, because they have been better before now. As usual, the prospects for hope seem to depend upon some degree of mystification.

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The Greasy Pole

BLIND AMBITION. By JOHN DEAN. *Simon & Schuster. 415 pp. $11.95.*

Reviewed by JAMES Q. WILSON

THE veterans of the Nixon-administration scandals have displayed almost the full range of possible reactions: Nixon has been defiant, Agnew vulgar, Krogh apologetic, Ehrlichman inventive, Mitchell silent, Colson reborn, and Dean descriptive. But the most useful reaction has yet to appear—explanation. Three years after Watergate began to come apart, we still have no good account of why the Democratic National Headquarters was bugged, why the clumsy cover-up was mounted, or why the White House tapes were left intact.

Had John Dean been close to the key decisions, we might now know the answers, for there can be little doubt of his memory or his candor. The essential elements, and indeed most of the details, of his testimony to the Ervin Committee have survived the tests of time and cross-examination. No one in a position to know has come forward with any convincing denials of the assertions made in this book which, taken as a whole, seem to accord with what is known from other sources. But Dean was not close to the center until the center began to collapse, and he was brought in first to help repair the damage and finally to take the blame for it.

As a historical document, this book has some troublesome aspects, chiefly the failure to distinguish clearly between conversations that are in fact quoted verbatim (apparently from the tapes or tape transcripts) and those, much more numerous, that are reconstructions of what Dean recalls others as having said. But the alert reader will be able to spot the differences: exact records of what people say always produce more clumsy, elliptical dialogue than even the most sensitive reconstructions.

There are tempting hints of the motives for the bugging, hints similar to those heard in other quarters. The link between Lawrence O'Brien and the Howard Hughes interests is alluded to, though not very precisely. President Nixon did dictate a memorandum to H. R. Haldeman in January 1971, ordering an investigation of the "very heavy retainer" received by O'Brien from "one of Hughes's people." The directive was passed by Haldeman to Dean for action. Dean, in turn, found his way to Robert Bennett, son of a Republican Senator from Utah and the head of a Washington public-relations firm that had Hughes as a client. Bennett, according to Dean, confirmed "unequivocally" that O'Brien was still under contract to Hughes, though payments under that contract were being disputed in consequence of an internecine struggle among rival factions in the Hughes empire. The alleged O'Brien backer was Robert Maheu who had been deposed as head of Hughes's Las Vegas operations. However, Bennett would not or could not supply concrete evidence of the O'Brien retainer fee. Four months later, in April 1972, Nixon ordered the creation of a "political intelligence capability" for the coming campaign. Two months later, in June, the break-in at O'Brien's office occurred.

After the break-in, O'Brien and others sued the Committee to Reelect the President. To counteract the suit, John Ehrlichman got the Internal Revenue Service to audit O'Brien's tax returns in hopes of tracing the source of his very large outside income. John Mitchell, Dean claims, asked an intermediary to offer O'Brien an end to the IRS investigation in exchange for O'Brien's dropping his suit. The intermediary allegedly reported back that O'Brien was interested in the deal, but nothing happened because the judge hearing the O'Brien suit decided to halt the proceedings to insure that the Watergate burglars would not have their criminal trial prejudiced by adverse publicity (and, according to Dean, because the judge was eager to oblige the White House).

A tantalizing set of facts, but nothing conclusive. If the O'Brien-Hughes link was the basis for the break-in, it was an unsuccessful operation, for the link was still being explored afterward by means of the IRS audit. And if the link was not the object, what was?

If the book does not explain Watergate, neither does it explain John Dean. He is unsparing in his self-description: ambitious, fawning, power-hungry. "I reflected on my career and listed my talents: an organized mind, an ability to read the desires of my superiors, and capacity to anticipate. Deep down, I knew I was a meek, favor-currying staff man. . . ." Later, more bluntly, he explained his rise (to a Mafia gunman when the two met in prison) as having occurred because "I just kissed a lot of ass." Though reluctant at first to leave a comfortable job in the Justice Department, he later took eagerly to the demands of power. He sought out ways to prove himself "tough" as well as indispensable. The work itself was so consuming as to anesthetize any gnawing anxieties, and what work could not accomplish, liquor and chasing women did (Dean, during the early White House months, was not married). "The assignment drove my anxiety into temporary retreat" is a phrase that appears, in various forms, repeatedly.

Apparent success was also reassuring. Dean's first reaction to the President's false claim that a "Dean investigation" of Watergate was under way was not fear that he had just been made part of a vast public lie, but pride: "I was basking in the glory of being publicly perceived as the man the President had turned to with a nasty problem. . . ." The closer he got to the President, the more he came to believe the unbelievable—that the

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cover-up would work, that a bizarre collection of ex-CIA agents, self-styled crusaders, unprincipled lawyers, and public-relations men could somehow hang together to avoid being hanged separately.

But the very access to the President was in time to become the source of anxieties that could no longer be repressed. Nixon revealed himself as "rambling and forgetful," a man whose thoughts and actions were "far from organized," and whose physical mannerisms were clumsy. Getting power was wildly exciting; becoming accustomed to power, and learning of the deficiencies of its source, were profoundly unsettling. The defects of principle could not for long be supplied by the advantages of power, and soon Dean stopped looking forward to his meetings with the President because they no longer offered him confidence. "The power fix, the high which I had pursued all my adult life, was wearing off. I was coming down." It was fear, not scruple, that led Dean, via his attorney, to talk to the federal prosecutors and finally to the Ervin Committee. Nor does Dean pretend otherwise.

There are no heroes, few decent folk, and many villains in this account. It is rare to find one's sympathies engaged as one reads. One might sympathize with Mrs. Dean, but she appears as only a bit player —decent, upset, but nonetheless peripheral. Perhaps because Dean came from the Justice Department, perhaps because the political leadership there was marginally superior to the senior White House staff, the portrayals of John Mitchell and Richard Kleindienst are softer than those of Haldeman and Ehrlichman.

If there is any group that receives almost unrelieved hostility, it is the media. Some of this can be explained by the natural resentment of a man on his way down toward the institution that was helping pull him down, but even from a skeptical reading of Dean's remarks on the press, a convincing picture of media lying and distortion emerges that is as hard to defend as the scheming of the White House. Given the justifiable pride the media take in the accomplish-

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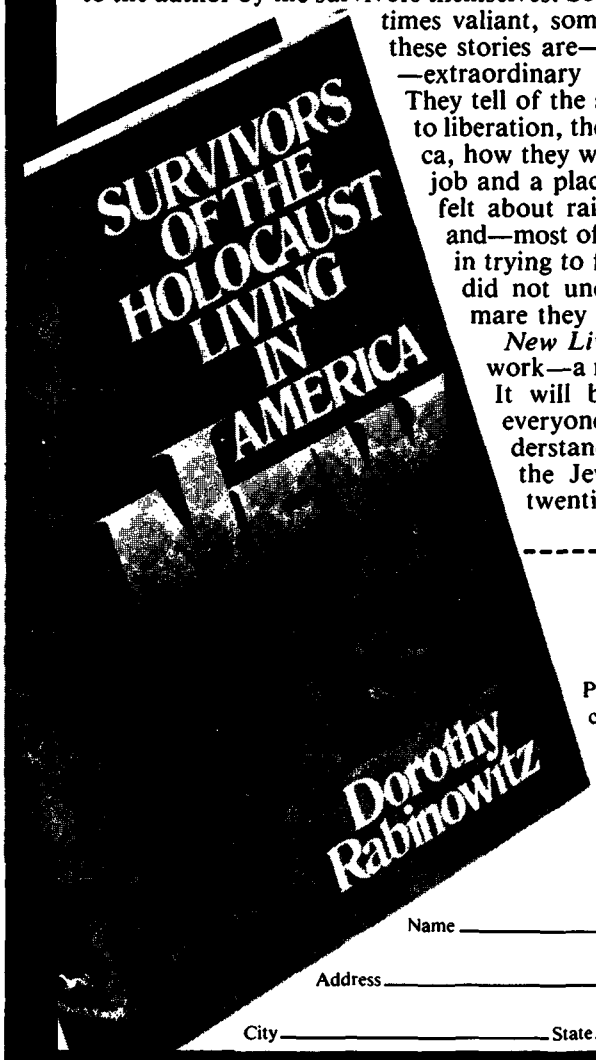

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ments of Woodward and Bernstein, it is important to remember that as Dean began to crack, the press initially became a conduit for White House distortions about him. Jack Anderson printed, with no checking, unsubstantiated charges against Dean. Daniel Schorr broadcast on CBS an unsubstantiated and vicious rumor that Dean was seeking immunity from prosecution because he feared homosexual attacks in prison. Joseph Alsop referred to Dean as a "bottom-dwelling slug." *Newsweek* editors rewrote an interview with Dean so as to make it an attack on him, even though none of the rewriters had ever met him. As Dean observes ironically at one point, "Reporters who swore publicly that they'd rot in jail before revealing their sources were calling [Dean's press aide] with stories the White House was trying to plant on them . . . [and offering] to trade them for *my* stories on the White House."

The book is fascinating, in part because of Dean's facts, in part because of the considerable writing skills of Dean's amanuensis, Taylor Branch. But it leaves Watergate unexplained, and Dean only slightly explained. We learn little of the innermost life of John Dean, but what little we learn is apparently all there is.

The Jewish State

A HISTORY OF ISRAEL: FROM THE RISE OF ZIONISM TO OUR TIME. By HOWARD M. SACHAR. *Knopf. 883 pp. $20.00.*

Reviewed by JOSEPH SHATTAN

HOWARD SACHAR'S monumental study, which deals with the history of Zionism, the rise of Arab nationalism, British diplomacy in the Middle East, and the military, political, social, and cultural vicissitudes of the state of Israel from 1948 to the present, is an extraordinary work, a triumph of comprehensive scholarship which is also a delight to read. Sachar's treatment

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of the Arab-Israeli conflict is especially noteworthy: while he appears to sympathize with Israel's "doves," he does not underestimate the depth of Arab hostility to Israel, and he is sharply critical of Zionism for its early failure to gauge the true nature of Arab nationalism. Sachar is also a stern critic of modern Israeli society, though here his powers of judgment and analysis occasionally desert him.

As Sachar shows, the early Zionist leaders assumed that Jewish-Arab relations in the newly-arisen Jewish state would be harmonious not because they were unaware of an Arab presence in Palestine or looked down on the Arabs as their cultural inferiors but rather because, like most 19th-century liberals, they assumed that material progress could reconcile even the most serious conflict of interests. The persistent and seemingly intractable "Jewish problem" was also, in their opinion, amenable to rational solution. In his lengthy essay, *Selbstemanzipation* ("Auto-emancipation"), published in 1882, Leon Pinsker explained that relations among peoples were based on mutual respect, not love, and that Jews would not be accorded the respect they demanded until they attained national equality. "There is something unnatural about a people without a territory, just as there is about a man without a shadow. . . ." With the achievement of statehood, however, Jews would no longer constitute a "phantom people" and anti-Semitism would consequently disappear.

It was in Europe's interest, moreover, to facilitate Jewish immigration to Palestine. With the departure of the Jewish population, argued Theodor Herzl, Jewish economic competition in Europe would decline, and anti-Semitism with it. Besides, the Zionist movement would harness energies that might otherwise find an outlet in revolutionary agitation. And because Zionism was clearly the rational solution to the "Jewish problem," it followed that European governments would lend the movement their support. "The world needs the Jewish state," Herzl wrote in *Der Judenstaat*, "therefore it will arise."

Herzl's historical legacy was twofold: his poise and charisma restored to the persecuted Jewish masses in Eastern Europe a sense of national dignity; and his diplomatic machinations put Zionism "on the map" of international politics. In Chaim Weizmann, Herzl found a worthy successor. The eminent British diplomat, Sir Charles Webster, who first met Weizmann at the War Office in 1917, considered him the greatest statesman of his time. Like Herzl, the young Weizmann was wary of socialism. In a letter to Herzl in 1903, for example, Weizmann lamented the growth of "radicalism" among Russian-Jewish youth. "Our hardest struggle everywhere," Weizmann noted, "is conducted against Jewish social democrats." Although Weizmann became friendlier to socialist Zionism in later years, at this point he regarded it as "a kind of pestilence." A genuine Anglophile, Weizmann

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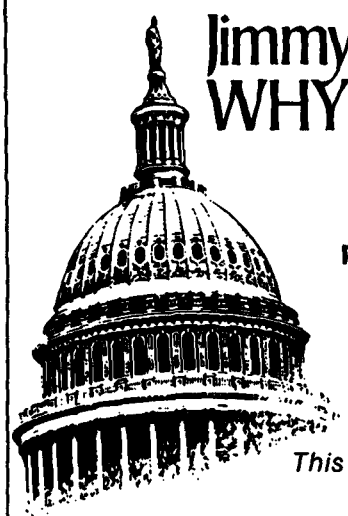

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found in British society, with its combination of liberalism and tradition, a model worthy of Zionist emulation.

It was in large part due to Weizmann's diplomatic skill that the Zionist movement achieved its first great breakthrough: the issuance of the Balfour Declaration in November 1917. Ironically enough, "it was the obsessive desire to win the friendship of world Jewry that influenced the War Cabinet's decision" to issue the Declaration. British leaders simply took it for granted that "international Jewry," with its legendary financial power and political connections, would return the favor by bringing the United States into the war on the side of the Allies and by preventing Russia from dropping out of the Entente. (In the event, the United States was already at war when the Balfour Declaration was issued, and the new Bolshevik regime was hardly susceptible to Zionist pressure.) Even so, there was formidable opposition to British sponsorship of a Jewish National Home within the War Cabinet, and without Weizmann's extraordinary powers of persuasion the Balfour Declaration might never have seen the light of day.

But while Weizmann, Brandeis, Nahum Sokolow, and the other leading figures of the Zionist movement who had won the great political victories of the war and immediate postwar period were all liberal "General Zionists," political power in Jewish Palestine itself was coming increasingly to rest in the hands of the socialist Zionists who despised the middle-class liberalism of General Zionism. Gifted theoreticians like Nahum Syrkin and Ber Borochov had achieved the not inconsiderable feat of reconciling socialism and Zionism. Basically, they argued that anti-Semitism was a consequence of the abnormal Jewish class structure. The "Jewish problem" would not be solved until a Jewish proletariat emerged, but a landless people was unable to generate a proletariat. Thus, Zionism was justified from a socialist point of view. "From the contemporary vantage point," writes Sachar, "Borochov's formulation may seem riddled with inconsistencies. But for the intensely class-conscious Jewish proletariat of early 20th-century Russia, it appeared as if he had devised a theory of Zionism that evolved deductively, almost mathematically, from Marxist premises."

THE EARLY socialist-Zionist pioneers favored a policy of aggressive class warfare. In 1906, David Ben-Gurion, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, and other Labor Zionists issued a demand for "public ownership of the means of production" in Palestine. Since Palestine was an impoverished wasteland at the time, the demand was somewhat premature, and to middle-class Zionists it must have seemed rather bizarre. Yet given the complicated system of electing delegates to Zionist congresses, whereby double weight was accorded to votes cast by Zionists residing in Palestine itself, it was not long before the Labor Zionists came to dominate the Zionist movement.

By the 1930's, moreover, what was left of the early liberal orientation of General Zionism was repudiated again, this time by the Right. In 1935, Vladimir Jabotinsky announced the establishment of a "New Zionist Organization" which would have nothing to do with the older Zionist Organization. Jabotinsky's "Revisionist" Zionism stressed paramilitary activity, gymnastics, uniforms, and parades. "While its leadership revered Jabotinsky as man and leader," Sachar writes, "the movement moved further to the Right than he himself would have preferred, and at times came dangerously close to emulating the Giovanni Fascisti of Italy." Jabotinsky stressed the priority of national over class struggle. "If there is a class in whose hands the future lies," he wrote, "it is we, the bourgeoisie, the enemies of a supreme police state, the ideologists of individualism. . . . We don't have to be ashamed, my bourgeois comrades." Despite its economic "individualism," Revisionism's uncompromising militarism repudiated the liberal vision of Weizmann and Herzl no less decisively than did Labor Zionism.

For its part, Labor Zionism grad-

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ually moderated its class approach, and in 1930 a new political grouping known thenceforth as Mapai emerged as the dominant party in Jewish Palestine. The guiding spirit of the new party was Berl Katznelson, whom Sachar correctly calls "an authentic giant" of Labor Zionism. "It was chiefly Katznelson's genius that steered Mapai away from the traditional theorizing complexities of Zionist politics and concentrated instead on pragmatic gains for Jewish workingmen in the Jewish National Home."

Yet while the Labor Zionists were gradually and painfully divesting themselves of their earlier sectarianism, their approach to the "Arab question" was still dominated by traditional Marxist categories of analysis. Even Katznelson, "otherwise an incisive and sophisticated intellect, was convinced that the *fellahin*, exploited by a rapacious feudal plutocracy, soon would appreciate the importance of economic solidarity with the Jews." According to Sachar, however, "the 'class' approach to Arab nationalism was bankrupt from the outset, as was every other effort to qualify or minimize the depth of this sentiment. Perhaps the one Zionist faction that took the Arab problem seriously from the outset was Revisionism, although the latter's solution was hardly that of appeasement or compassion." In defense of the Labor Zionists, however, it must be added that while they were often slow to grasp the true dimension of Arab nationalism, their approach was never characterized by willful blindness or inhumanity. The conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, they admitted, was not between absolute right and wrong, but between the greater and the lesser injustice. Nor is it likely that a more accommodating posture would have substantially diminished Arab hostility to Zionism.

For all the diplomatic successes of Weizmann and the General Zionists, the state of Israel could not conceivably have come to be established without the utter dedication and anguished fanaticism of the Labor Zionist *chalutzim* (pioneers). The very triumph of Labor Zionism, however, has brought serious problems in its wake. In the first place, Israeli political life has become dangerously polarized as a result of the bitter feud between Labor Zionism and Revisionist Zionism, with the balance of political power residing more often than not in the theocratically-oriented religious parties or even in the Communist parties. The once dominant progressive liberalism of General Zionism has been practically discarded.

The ideological conflicts within the labor movement, meanwhile, have led to the relentless politicization of nearly every aspect of Israeli public life. "In time," Sachar observes,

> entire ministries became indistinguishable from party cells. The notion of a politically neutral civil service was so alien to the Israeli mentality that a civil-service commission was organized only after the first great spurt of government activity had passed, in 1950. . . . In the Jewish Agency and the quasi-governmental Histadrut, depoliticization never really began; from beginning to end, job openings and entire departments of these institutions were staffed on the basis of party proportions.

The role of the Histadrut in Israeli society is especially problematic. It is usually described as a trade union, but it is much more than that. The Histadrut is perhaps the dominant institution in Israeli society, and its influence on almost every aspect of Israeli life is such that it defies simple characterization. From the liberal point of view, such an accumulation of power, no matter how benign in intent, is deplorable. From the socialist point of view, however, it is commendable: since the working class is necessarily progressive, and since the Histadrut *represents* the working class, the more power it wields, the better. It is certainly undeniable that in its social idealism and concern for the welfare of Israel's citizens the Histadrut has often set an example second to none. Still, Sachar argues that its very success has undermined the "plain and simple respect for work" which lies at the heart of the Zionist redemptive effort. Israel's

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struggle for survival, he concludes, is bound to be mortally close, since it is being waged "less against the surrounding enemy than against the incipient blight within the Israeli people themselves."

Sachar's moral condemnation of Israeli society is oddly inconsistent with the generally judicious tone that he maintains throughout the rest of his book. Israel may be far from the austere utopia envisioned by the socialist-Zionist pioneers, but it is misleading to argue, as Sachar does, that "materialism and self-indulgence had become the mood of the 1960's and 1970's." On all too many occasions, Israel's citizen-army has given tangible expression to the enormous reserves of idealism and self-sacrifice present at every level of Israeli life. While Sachar's criticisms are valid up to a point, they are also contradictory: on the one hand, he deplores the persistence of the revolutionary-Zionist tradition in Israeli politics, with its dogmatism, excessive politicization, and concentration of power in the Histadrut; on the other hand, he also deplores the decline of the revolutionary tradition in Israeli society, and the consequent devaluation of the work ethic and loss of egalitarian *élan*. Yet while a polity retaining the most attractive features of a revolutionary tradition within a liberal framework is perhaps the best of all possible worlds, it is also the rarest, and given all the other problems which beset it, it seems strange indeed to predicate Israel's survival on the achievement of some secular utopia.

Low Horizons

AMERICA IN OUR TIME. By GODFREY HODGSON. *Doubleday. 564 pp. $12.95.*

Reviewed by ELLIOTT ABRAMS

After years of reporting on life in America for British newspapers, Godfrey Hodgson has now attempted to tell, and to explain, the story of the postwar period in this country. Hodgson's skill as a journalist has produced a wide-ranging, well-written book which covers all the bases—from Acheson, McCarthy, and Bundy to the Beatles and Charles Reich. Unfortunately, when Hodgson leaves reporting and turns to analysis, his skills begin to fail him.

Hodgson's analysis is easily summarized. After World War II, America's unmatched power and prosperity led a broad consensus of Americans to adopt what he calls the "liberal ideology." According to this liberalism, really a "conservative liberalism," American economic growth would allow our "injustices and inequities" to be abolished with little or no social unrest and little or no sacrifice by the better-off classes. Meanwhile, American military power would result in nearly unlimited American ability, and responsibility, to oversee international political change. These views, Hodgson says, were held by a consensus "which stretched right across the broad center of the political spectrum. Only the extremes to Left and Right remained aloof from it. The 'liberal ideology,' in fact, was the ideology of the Center." Moreover, Hodgson tells us, this ideology, though "the creation of an elite" or establishment, was "more or less widely accepted by ordinary people."

In Hodgson's view, the liberal ideology was a "dangerous illusion," which was exploded in the 60's by the roughly simultaneous outbreak of racial violence and large-scale war in Vietnam. The absence of progress on race showed that it was foolish to believe any longer that economic growth, rather than wholesale income distribution, could satisfy the needs of less fortunate Americans, while the war, the inevitable result of our "internationalism," showed the folly of our foreign policies. The results, we are told, were that "the years 1965 to 1968 were years of polarization for America." Indeed, by 1966, "events had revealed the inherent contradictions of the liberal ideology." At the same time the new youth culture was reflecting, but also building, disaffection among young Americans; Hodgson writes that "it would be hard to exaggerate the influence the Beatles had on the generation of Americans who grew up in the 60's."

After all this turmoil and disaffection, we now live in a "system in ruins." However, this is the "price [that] must be paid to be free from illusions, and . . . if the illusions are dangerous enough, the price is well paid." Americans are now, for the first time, asking not "*how* to solve their problems, but *whether* problems could be solved." The new watchwords must be "Down to earth. Limited resources."

THIS analysis of recent American life, with its description of a period of political and moral crisis and of international overreaching, is a familiar one: Senators Frank Church and George McGovern or journalists such as Tom Wicker, for instance, would find little to disagree with here. Nevertheless, it is a difficult analysis to prove, especially since it is not true. Oddly enough, *America In Our Time* itself contains much evidence that it is not true.

Vietnam provides a good example. Hodgson notes that, according to poll data, most Americans despised the "peace movement" and were opposed to the Vietnam war simply because of their "cannily realistic judgment that the war didn't seem worth the price." He also reports a 1968 survey revealing that "college-educated white people in their twenties were more likely than older people with only grade-school education both to justify the war and to favor intensification of it." Such data give little support to Hodgson's picture of an entire population so deeply offended by the immorality of America's effort in Vietnam that it now rejects wholesale all of America's foreign policy.

Similar examples abound. Though he draws a picture of an America divided into two camps, Hodgson at one point concludes that "it never was true that American society was polarized." Though he writes of the 60's as a period in which Americans questioned the very principles under which their society is organized, he states in an-

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ELLIOTT ABRAMS, *who appears regularly in these pages, reviewed Lino Graglia's* Disaster by Decree *in November 1976.*

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other chapter that it was the media, not the majority, "which had been primarily responsible for raising grand questions of morality."

These contradictions point to the central problem in Hodgson's analysis, for they all can be explained by the simple fact that while some Americans did feel the enormous disillusionment which Hodgson describes, and did resign from the "liberal consensus," others did not. Surprisingly, Hodgson never asks who composed the membership of the former group, and who the latter, though clues to an answer are scattered throughout *America In Our Time.*

Thus, in discussing the origins of the "liberal consensus" in the 40's and 50's, Hodgson is careful to separate the elites who created the "liberal ideology" from the "ordinary people" who merely accepted it. When discussing the protests and disillusionment and backlash of the 60's and early 70's, he remains aware of the distinction: he notes that the youth protests and New Politics of the 60's were largely an upper-middle-class affair, while the "New Majority" and Middle America of more recent years were predominantly a middle- and working-class phenomenon. One expects an inquiry, then, as to *who* lost faith in the "liberal ideology"—ordinary people, or the elites alone? Is Hodgson's story that of millions of Americans who have come to realize that the nation's problems are far greater than anticipated, have passed through a period of deep political and moral crisis, finally to emerge with their hopes in and expectations of America greatly lowered? Or is it a tale of the American establishment, which, faced with racial and international problems and the rebellion of its children, has lost confidence in itself and in America and has thereby lost the confidence of the American people?

These are questions Hodgson never poses. He has made his choice: it is not certain elites that have failed, it is America. Though he writes of "the failure of the political system to represent the needs and grievances of the majority," he does not ask whether it is not simply that the elites, in the end, misunderstood or disdained those needs and those grievances.

Once it is clear, to Hodgson at least, that the American system is failing to meet the needs of the people, and that economic growth will not greatly ameliorate social or economic problems, the path is open to his conclusion, his blueprint for our future:

> There will have to be less emphasis on equality of opportunity, and more on equality of condition. The traditional goals of absolute freedom and maximum economic abundance will have to be modified in the more intricate equilibrium of a society that accepts the limits of human possibility and strives for the greatest possible measure of justice and equality. It will not be easy. Yet, sooner or later, the American people will have no alternative but to attempt it.

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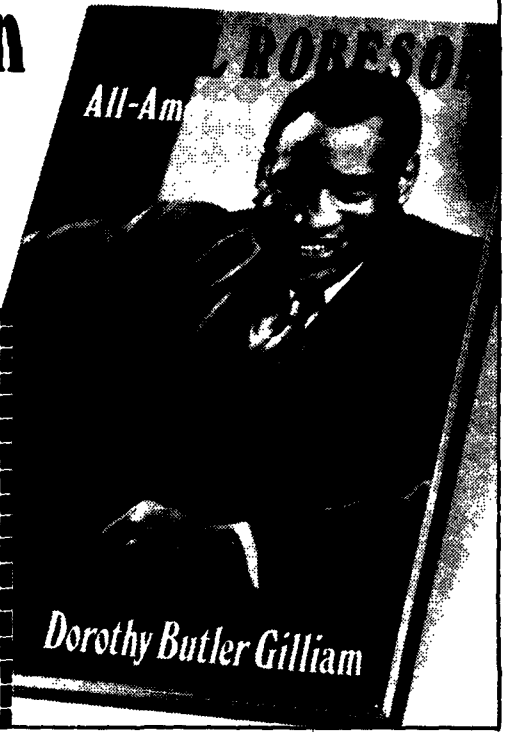

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This vision of a new America, healthier because it will be without illusions, learning to live with shrunken hopes and lowered horizons, aware that its former "way of life" must now disappear, is a somber portrait, and a remarkable likeness—not, however, of the United States but of Hodgson's own United Kingdom. Hodgson's prescription for our future is a fair description of recent British history and of current Labor-party policy. Yet in view of the British experience, the package he offers—limited growth, limited economic opportunity, and emphasis on egalitarianism and "leveling" rather than on equal opportunity—is unlikely to attract most Americans. This society may no longer be the America of the 19th century, but still less is it the Britain of the 20th, grappling with a rigid class structure, burdened with socialist ideologies, and saddled with limited economic resources. One need hardly be Pollyannish about America's present difficulties to reject Hodgson's view of its future.

After Stalin

KHRUSHCHEV: THE YEARS IN POWER. By ROY A. MEDVEDEV and ZHORES A. MEDVEDEV. Translated by ANDREW R. DURKIN. *Columbia University Press. 198 pp. $10.95.*

Reviewed by JOSHUA RUBENSTEIN

IT IS doubtful that a gang of thugs ever exercised greater power in the course of modern history than Stalin's Politburo in the Soviet Union. Yezhov, Yagoda, Kaganovich, Beria, Malenkov, Vishinsky, the Master himself—all gained power through murder and intrigue and held on by similar means until they themselves disappeared, butchers swallowed up by their own meat grinder. Like Stalin, his cronies were vulgar and crude, fawning over his every word. Stalin often kept them up all night (he hated being alone), getting them drunk, inviting them to watch American Westerns (an offer you couldn't refuse), keeping them at his table until dawn when they would leave to catch a few hours of sleep before going to the Kremlin.

Out of this pack of thugs Nikita Khrushchev also emerged. He, too, climbed over the bodies of former colleagues, victims of Stalin's wrath. On orders, and, one can be sure, on his own initiative as well, he helped to purge party cadres, both in the Ukraine and during his years in Moscow. And though later he denounced Stalin for the terror waged on the party, Khrushchev never came to believe that collectivization and the murder of Stalin's leading opponents, like Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Trotsky, were anything but historical necessities on the road to Communism.

Yet, for all that, Khrushchev was different. In World War II, unlike most of his colleagues, he made a point of touring the countryside before, during, and after Hitler's invasion. He saw the famine, he saw the heroism of the soldiers, the devastation, the stupidity of the party commissars who interfered with the few competent generals and officers who survived the purges of 1936. He "got his boots muddy," as the Russians say; indeed, he never enjoyed being summoned to Moscow, away from the miners and farmers whom he genuinely liked. In addition, and this is not a trivial point, Khrushchev had a warm, intelligent wife who, by all reports, moderated his temper and encouraged whatever humane and generous instincts he managed to retain.

ROY and Zhores Medvedev have written a fair-minded, incisive account of Khrushchev's years in power. For readers familiar with Roy Medvedev's work, the lack of "liberal-Marxist" rhetoric in this volume will come as a pleasant surprise. But then Zhores, his twin brother, is not a Marxist and it is Zhores, now living in England (he was deprived of his Soviet passport and citizenship during a trip abroad in 1973), who completed the manuscript. Furthermore, the details regarding Soviet agriculture that form the heart of *Khrushchev: The Years in Power* embody Zhores Medvedev's well-known work on Trofim Lysenko and Soviet science. And so this volume, too, is a sober piece of scholarship, not a polemic, not even a prescription for reform of the type that Soviet dissidents circulate.

As a piece of scholarship, the book has certain limitations. While it is the first study of Khrushchev's regime by a Soviet author, it does not add considerably to what Western scholars, like Edward Crankshaw, have reported for some time. What *is* important about it is the fact that Khrushchev is the subject and not Stalin, whose shadow dominates virtually all historical studies in *samizdat*. By analyzing Khrushchev's difficulties in power, moreover, the authors have initiated a discussion of the complex political inadequacies of the Soviet system—in contrast to the usual focus on abuses of power and outright crimes. In this regard, it is relevant to learn, as Zhores Medvedev informs us in the preface, that the authors published articles on Khrushchev's agricultural policy in the late 1960's in the unofficial journal, *Political Diary*, which circulated among high-level members of the party.

FOR THE West, more than ten years after Khrushchev's downfall, it is hard to recall the heady optimism generated by his reforms or the bewildering despair over his many impatient and foolish schemes. For the Medvedev brothers, however,

> Khrushchev and his times are a still living history—we participated in the hopes and disenchantments of the period; we experienced enthusiasm and bitterness, elation at his bold political and diplomatic reforms, and exasperation at his sometimes startling ignorance when it came to handling simple economic, agronomic, and theoretical problems.

This was a crucial part of Khrushchev's downfall. Although much has been made of the fact that his reforms were going too far for the party elite, Khrushchev, in fact, was "leading the nation to the brink of economic catastrophe."

From the outset of his regime, agriculture presented the gravest

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difficulties. In 1952, the year before Stalin died, grain output per capita was lower than in 1913. The disruptions generated by collectivization and then war only partially explain this lack of development. Soviet agriculture was also affected severely by the bizarre genetic theories of Trofim Lysenko. "Knowledge about ways to develop hybrids remained limited," the Medvedevs relate, while, under Lysenko's direction, his protegés attempted "to transform one species into another (e.g., rye into wheat, etc.) by changing its environment." Later, when Khrushchev encouraged greater corn production in order to increase available fodder, "Lysenko dismissed the new methods of seed-corn production put out by capitalist firms and held inbred-line hybridization to be injurious to a plant's 'biology.'" Although Khrushchev ridiculed some of Lysenko's ideas, he remained under his influence; it was only with Khrushchev's downfall in 1964 that Lysenko was finally dismissed from all upper-echelon policy-making positions.

Nonetheless, Khrushchev energetically pushed various agricultural reforms. At his suggestion, farmers and other citizens were allowed to own a certain amount of livestock and to plant gardens and orchards without having to pay a tax on them. Although this simple reform affected hardly more than 2 per cent of all land under cultivation, it helped to produce immediate results. Within a few years the number of sheep doubled, the amount of grain sold to the state nearly doubled, and there were sharp increases in both milk and egg production.

All this, however, was not enough for Khrushchev. In his haste, he advocated several new programs that, had they been implemented cautiously, with adequate planning, might have changed the direction of Soviet agriculture. Instead, the headlong cultivation of virgin lands, the corn campaign, and the dismantling of the machine-tractor stations all disrupted agricultural development, prevented an intensive approach to cultivation, and led to the economic catastrophes that, by 1964,

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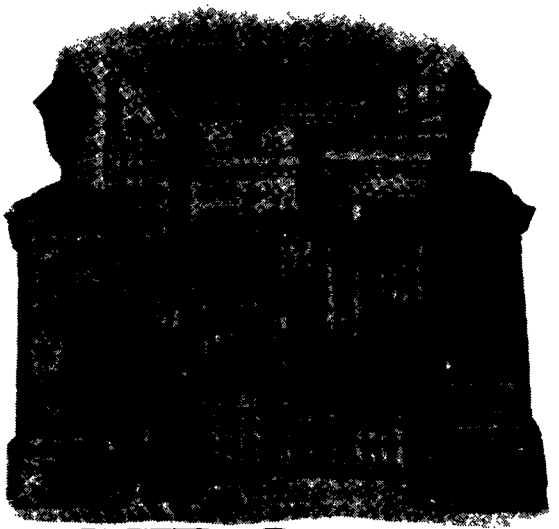

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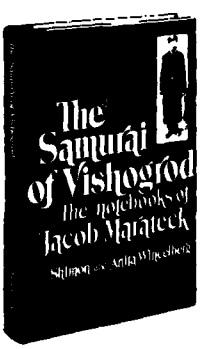

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compelled Khrushchev's colleagues to remove him from office.

WHILE it is true, as the Medvedevs say, that Khrushchev could not govern "a vast country like the Soviet Union in the midst of a complex scientific and technological revolution," he did accomplish certain reforms that not even his heirs have been able to reverse. Most importantly, Khrushchev made sure that the country would not soon again be overwhelmed by police terror. He released between seven and eight million political prisoners, allowing them to return home and confirm the unbelievable magnitude of Stalin's crimes. As late as 1961, at the 22nd Party Congress, Khrushchev renewed his attack on Stalin, providing new disclosures of the dictator's cruelty. And though Khrushchev exploited these revelations to shore up his declining popularity, his colleagues no doubt grew apprehensive that he was letting too much out of the bag.

Since Khrushchev's removal, his heirs have not managed things much better. While the Soviet Union contains the largest area of arable land in the world, and employs several times more agricultural workers than the United States, it produces only 80 per cent as much grain for food and fodder, while it uses fifteen dollars' worth of grain to produce a dollar's worth of livestock, nearly double the American ratio. Such weary statistics are well known. But the most astonishing indication of the failure of Soviet agriculture is the fact that 30 per cent of total agricultural production comes from private plots that are only a small fraction of cultivated land.

In short, economic stagnation has deepened since Khrushchev's downfall. His sober, cautious heirs, having repudiated his "hare-brained schemes," have yet to display greater economic discernment. But where Khrushchev made himself vulnerable with his liberal tendencies and his revelations about Stalin, Brezhnev and his colleagues appear secure. More than the Medvedevs imply in this book, what gave Khrushchev his unique stature may have insured his downfall.

Literary Talk

WRITERS AT WORK: THE PARIS REVIEW INTERVIEWS. FOURTH SERIES. Edited by GEORGE PLIMPTON. *Viking. 459 pp. $14.95.*

Reviewed by JONATHAN WILSON

INTERVIEWER: And there's your new poem, "Talking To Mice." Have you any favorite mythological mice?

AUDEN: Mythological! What on earth could you be referring to? Are there any, aside from Mickey Mouse? You must mean fictional mice.

INTERVIEWER: I must.

AUDEN: Oh yes, there's the mice of Beatrix Potter, of which I'm quite fond.

INTERVIEWER: How about Mickey?

AUDEN: He's all right.

INTERVIEWER: Do you believe in the Devil?

AUDEN: Yes.

SUCH are the *Paris Review* interviews. A strange mixture of the profound and the inane, insight and absurdity. This Fourth Series, identical in format to its three predecessors, contains sixteen interviews, most of which were conducted in the late 1960's. There are six poets and ten novelists represented; the playwrights, after a short run in the Third Series, have disappeared again.

The question arises as to whether or not any kind of general conclusions on the state of literary culture today can be drawn from these interviews. There is, however, no recognizable group in this new series whose consciousness is expressed in such a way as to indicate a shared outlook or intention. In the Second Series, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Marianne Moore, and the young Robert Lowell were interrelated to a high degree in both their ideas and their activity. A group dynamic existed; the modernist movement and its offshoots gave a sense of cohesiveness to the literary scene. Ezra Pound (about whom al-

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JONATHAN WILSON, *a new contributor, is a young English writer doing graduate work in literature at Oxford.*

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most everyone in the Second Series had an anecdote to relate) was the busiest planet in the galaxy and even managed to draw Robert Frost into his orbit. By contrast, the poets of the Fourth Series—John Berryman, Conrad Aiken, George Seferis, W. H. Auden, Robert Graves, and Anne Sexton—are disparate personalities and hardly seem to interact at all. All writers write in isolation but the sense of a literary group such as gathered around Pound in London in the early part of the century or in New York in the 1940's, is no longer with us. The shared reminiscences of the Second Series evoked a sense of unity of experience; in the Third Series the stratification of the generations was plain to see, Jean Cocteau and Evelyn Waugh rubbing shoulders with Norman Mailer and William S. Burroughs; in the Fourth Series the disintegration appears to be complete.

THE *Paris Review* interviews are retrospectives, and for this reason the title *Writers at Work* is slightly misleading, as it implies some sort of ongoing analysis of the contemporary scene. In fact, the book gives to established writers a chance to look back on their work and to assess their contributions and those of their forebears and contemporaries. Eight of the writers in the new volume have died since their interviews originally appeared in the magazine. John Updike, by far the youngest writer in the book, had published two books of poetry, five collections of short stories, and four novels at the time of the interview; Robert Graves had over a hundred and twenty volumes to look back on.

As the idea of a "movement" has disappeared, so has the idea of an "international audience" emerged. In the new series, writers from Denmark, Greece, and Argentina are added to the usual mixed bag of British and Americans. The availability of works in translation, particularly from Latin America, has placed a far more varied literary culture at the fingertips of the reader, and consequently, the history and culture he is now required to embrace defy him in their very broadness. As the *Paris Review* interviews would seem to indicate, the modern reader is now to be concerned with individual geniuses of a variety of cultures rather than with the literary movement or group. In most cases the relationship of the individual writer to his particular literary tradition (say, Jorge Luis Borges to Argentina) is unknown, and as a result their books tend to be read in a social and historical vacuum.

ALL the writers turn out to be good talkers: that is, one thinks they are, until one realizes that each interview has been carefully touched up and varnished in manuscript form in order to remove any traces of a stutter or an ill-thought-out remark. All are terrified of the tape recorder, though Seferis has a moment of triumph over the machine:

INTERVIEWER: The tape machine seems to have stopped recording. Say something and let's see if it's still working properly.
SEFERIS: Wallace Stevens was in an insurance company.

Even so, the interviews do manage to read like conversations, and half the fun of them lies in mining the deep pit of anecdotes that each writer has. Most are loath to talk about their work in great detail, but when they do it is both interesting and informative (thus, Saul Bellow on *Herzog* in the Third Series and Seferis on his poetry in the Fourth).

In the first interview of the First Series, E. M. Forster remarked that he was "more interested in works than in authors," but it is no doubt true that most people who read the *Paris Review* interviews do so in order to discover a little more about the personalities behind the names on book jackets. They are more likely, however, to find out a great deal about their chosen writ-

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er's assessment of other writers and little about the writer himself. Contradictory evaluations of literary figures are scattered over the pages of the interviews. Sometimes cross-checking brings humorous results. For example, interviewer to Evelyn Waugh (Third Series):

> What about Ronald Firbank?
> WAUGH: I enjoyed him very much when I was young. I can't read him now.
> INTERVIEWER: Why not?
> WAUGH: I think there would be something wrong with an elderly man who could enjoy Firbank.

And in the new series, W. H. Auden says, at the age of sixty-five:

> AUDEN: I suppose my favorite modern novelists are Ronald Firbank and P. G. Wodehouse.

Auden, in fact, is made to suffer the silliest interview—"What is the name of your cat?" "What is that big book over there?" Anthony Burgess provides two cooking recipes along with some information on Joyce, while Robert Graves proves to be the most interesting interviewee. He remarks at one point that poetry expresses the relation between "jewels and the matrix." The same might be said of the *Paris Review* interviews: searching for the jewels occasionally becomes laborious, but in the main it is worth the effort. Some fine stones have been turned up in the past. Interviewer to Waugh (Third Series):

> Have you found any professional critic of your work illuminating or helpful? Edmund Wilson for example?
> WAUGH: Is he an American?
> INTERVIEWER: Yes.
> WAUGH: I don't think what they have to say is of much interest, do you?

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Idealist's Progress

NORMAN THOMAS: THE LAST IDEALIST. By W. A. SWANBERG. *Scribner's. 494 pp. $14.95.*

Reviewed by ROGER STARR

IF AN autobiography is the story of a life written by its subject, there should be a word to describe the story of a life which must be written by its readers. Whether or not the word exists, W. A. Swanberg has assembled such a book about the American socialist leader Norman Thomas. It provides, at great length, an outline of its subject, leaving to the reader the task not only of penciling in the physical and intellectual details, but also of providing his own analysis and judgment. Thus, instead of excerpts from Thomas's speeches, we are given laudatory letters received by Thomas from those who heard him give them. Instead of selections from Thomas's books, we are given a statement originating with Thomas's son to the effect that his father's books were written too hastily. Those of Thomas's letters which Swanberg does include rarely help the reader to follow the development of an opinion or position. In short, this biography, as they say in Hollywood, is a star vehicle, made up of reaction shots.

To judge from Swanberg's narrative, reactions by Norman Thomas fall into two distinct categories. First come those people, described by Swanberg with loving care, who saw in Thomas the incarnation of their own belief that the essential basis for improvement in the human condition—for Progress, as Thomas felt free to call it—is moral conviction. Norman Thomas was a man capable of clinging to a lonely and even a dangerous stand that embodied in pure form moral truisms which most people accept in the abstract but can live with only when diluted. For example, he carried the generally popular view that peace is good to the generally unpopular conclusion of advocat-

ROGER STARR *is Henry Luce Professor of Urban Values at New York University and a member of the editorial board of the New York* Times.

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ing pacifism and refusing to serve in the nation's armed forces. Thomas's moral certainty on this and other issues inspired several generations of Americans and culminated in a quite extraordinary amount of hero worship, even on the part of those who did not or could not understand his positions, or even explicitly rejected them.

In the case of the older Jews who made up the bulk of the Eastern membership of the Socialist Party, U.S.A., Thomas's blend of Old Testament prophesy with the authentic style of the Presbyterian ministry seemed for a time to proffer a special welcome to the political life of America (their relation to him became much more complicated and ambiguous in the Depression and the war against Nazi Germany). To younger Jews in the 30's, Thomas became something of a sanitized father-substitute, a strong, almost majestic figure who was clearly much more at home in America than their own parents and who made the break from family tradition and into radical politics easier than it might otherwise have been. For Americans generally, Thomas's energetic enthusiasm, his ability to explain socialist principles in terms that "any Rotarian can grasp" (as a reviewer of one of his books put it), his marriage to a descendant of an old wealthy American family—all combined to suggest that just about anyone could become a moral absolutist, if only he were willing to be ruled by his righteous indignation.

This is all very well, even though it is impossible to know how effectively it changed the moral content of lives other than Thomas's. But the very terms in which Thomas presented himself to this class of people would suggest that his appeal was essentially religious rather than political, and it is therefore important to recall that Thomas was, by his own choice, a political figure. Which brings us to the second category of reactions to Thomas, those based on an estimate of his success in turning moral fervor into effective political action.

In this connection, Swanberg makes the familiar assertion that many of the New Deal reforms executed by Roosevelt were originally proposed in the early platforms of the Socialist party. Unfortunately, as proof of Thomas's political effectiveness, such assertions can best be described as weak and variable. There is no evidence that Roosevelt or his advisers turned to socialist doctrine for clues to policies that were generally in the air as the business slump deepened in the early 30's. One might guess to the contrary that Roosevelt, the supreme pragmatist, found certain programs somewhat *less* acceptable because they had originally been part of socialist doctrine and would therefore be harder to get past the legislature.

AN EVEN more important test than the acceptability of his party's program was Thomas's role as a party leader. An essential element in practical morality is the successful execution of group responsibilities which one has voluntarily assumed; Thomas's stewardship of his party fails very badly by this standard. Not only did the Socialists play no part in executing the policies which they may or may not have originally propounded, but under Thomas's leadership they won no important elective offices anywhere in the United States, and party membership shrank to nothing. The party was successfully raided by Communists and Trotskyists from the Left, and by New Dealers from the Right. In the decades since 1930, when socialist parties have risen to power through the electoral process all over the industrial world, the Socialist Party, U.S.A. has withered away.

Aside from winning elections, a respectable task for a political party dedicated to sweeping changes in government and social structure is the clarification of theory. On these grounds, Thomas is even weaker than on the practical grounds of political effectiveness. His vague pronouncements ("Production for use," "free access to raw materials") were pirated by others largely because they were in fact vague. Thomas's interest in political theory and analysis was no deeper than that of Theodore Roosevelt, whom he detested but somewhat resembled in his taste for

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action. Swanberg tells us (he means it as praise) that Thomas studied Marx with less ardor than he studied P. G. Wodehouse This is acceptable literary taste, but there is no evidence that Thomas studied any of the other political theorists, economists, sociologists—radical or conservative—whom most educated people consider helpful to an understanding of the contemporary condition.

FINALLY, one must ask whether Thomas's moral fervor and public stands on critical issues were indeed helpful to Progress. Here his admirers can claim some genuinely constructive efforts to set against the failures. Although initially a strong supporter of the Leninist revolution, Thomas was not blind to the defects of Stalinism. His anti-Stalinism, based on a suspicion of all governments except those which he saw as the victims of injustice, was firm, solid, persistent, and, once he had learned the painful lessons of American Stalinist duplicity, intelligent. He was an early opponent of American involvement in Indochina, as well as a critic of those elements in the antiwar movement who, as he once put it, loved the Vietcong more than they loved peace. He worked hard for civil rights in America, freedom for India, and other broad and general decencies.

On the other hand, he had great difficulty in dealing with issues which did not present clear-cut choices between good and evil; and on some of the major issues of the past forty years, Thomas's absolutist convictions led him into curious contradictions. A pacifist for most of his adult life, he nevertheless supported arms for the Spanish republic so that it could defend itself. His announced grounds were his fear of the growing fascist power. Yet when World War II broke out, he reverted to pacifism. Were the fascist dictatorships less menacing after they had achieved full power? Was the United States less pure than Spain? Still, he supported a negotiated peace with Germany.

Similarly, his announced sympathy for victims of injustice, and for movements of national self-determination, did not prevent him from holding an anti-Zionist and later an anti-Israel position (Swanberg tells us he objected to Israel's "linking of state and religion"). In the course of a trip to the Middle East in 1956, in the company of a man whom Swanberg describes as also an anti-Zionist, though a Jew, Thomas decided that the Israelis had unfairly kept the property abandoned by fleeing Arabs in 1948; not a word here on Jewish property confiscated by the various Arab governments in the Middle East, or on the Jewish refugees from Arab lands who equaled in number the Palestinian refugees.

SWANBERG makes clear Thomas's itch for action, but does not examine the degree to which his activism was used to evade deeper consideration of the issues, the weighing of alternatives, or the designing of appropriate strategies. Thomas was always prepared to take risks —and to have others take risks—in order to achieve the absolutist moral position; his response to those who questioned the wisdom of such a stand was to say that without such risk-taking we are all doomed anyway. The same response, however, could be used to justify any desperate undertaking at all. While Thomas will always enjoy the admiration of those who treasure moral fervor in the name of goals they believe in, his new biographer fails to show that the cause of Progress was in the least served by those qualities in his subject—absolute conviction, absolute lack of any sense of irony, and absolute readiness for action—which defined the nature of Norman Thomas's "idealism."

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